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Wild and (Barrier) Free:  
Wilderness Use by People with Disabilities

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## ABSTRACT

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TITLE: Wild and (Barrier) Free: Use of Wilderness by People  
with Disabilities

ABSTRACT: Because of the prohibition on mechanized travel in legal wilderness, some people believe that wilderness discriminates against people with disabilities. Three laws give us primary direction in wilderness accessibility. The forgers of the Wilderness Act discussed this issue in 1964, but did not include allowances for wheelchairs in the final Act. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires all federal programs and facilities to be accessible. The American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 called for a study on whether wilderness designation and management are discriminatory.

As part of that study, Forest Service wilderness managers were surveyed about wilderness use by people with disabilities, managers' opinions on present agency wilderness policies, and suggestions for change. The responses are tabulated in this report; some analysis and comparison is included. The results raise some questions. Although 28% of the respondents indicated that wheelchair use was not allowed in the wildernesses they managed, mechanical wheelchair use is allowed in wilderness per Forest Service Manual direction.

The results of this Forest Service wilderness managers survey were complied with other segments of the ADA study by Wilderness Inquiry, a non-profit organization under contract with the National Council on Disabilities. The complete report will be presented to Congress.

Recommendations for improving the accessibility of wilderness to people with disabilities conclude the paper.

Keywords: Wilderness, People with Disabilities, American's With Disabilities Act, Wilderness Accessibility

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Wild and (Barrier) Free: Wilderness use by people with disabilities.

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Summary: There is no proof that people with disabilities need wilderness experiences more or less than "able-bodied" people. Yet some feel that legal wilderness, with its prohibition on mechanical travel, discriminates against people with disabilities. Some conclude that wilderness, as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964, denies people with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy a wilderness experience.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1978, requires all federal programs, services and facilities to be accessible to people with disabilities. By implication this includes the federally-managed National Wilderness Preservation System. Federal wilderness management agencies have enacted regulations and/or have the intent to allow wheelchairs in wilderness. But wilderness trails are not constructed to accommodate wheelchairs, nor are any provisions made to assist people with disabilities including impairments other than mobility.

The movement to further protect the needs and basic civil rights of people with disabilities has progressed rapidly the past few years. As a society we are learning more about what disability is, and what it is like to deal with disability in everyday life. The landmark American's With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 primarily applied to private sector or state and local government programs and businesses. The one section of ADA that applied to the federal government dealt with the accessibility of wilderness. It called for a study of whether or not wilderness designation or management discriminates against people with disabilities, reaffirmed that nothing in the Wilderness Act is to be construed as prohibiting the use of a wheelchair in wilderness by a disabled person, and defined the term "wheelchair" for the intent of ADA. The National Council on Disability was to conduct the study and present the final report to Congress. The Council contracted with Wilderness Inquiry, a non-profit organization that provides wilderness trips for people of all abilities, to complete the study; the draft report is now in the hands of the Council.

Forest Service wilderness managers were surveyed by questionnaire for part of the ADA study and for this recreation short course project. The survey of Forest Service wilderness managers is tabulated in this



report. Using the Data General Computer network to distribute the questionnaire, copies of a questionnaire were sent to each Forest Service Regional Wilderness Specialist who forwarded it to wilderness managers. 210 responses were received, representing comments from 283 wildernesses. This is 77 percent of the 365 units of the Wilderness Preservation System managed by the Forest Service.

There is considerable variation in how information was reported. Some responses were from a part of one wilderness, while others combined as many as eight wildernesses in one response. The information collected is best viewed as a composite and not representing "the word" from any one wilderness.

The responses characterize Forest Service wilderness as primarily mountainous terrain, which most people visit with their family and friends. Most visitors hike or ride horseback. Most managers responded that they had received no inquiries from people with disabilities about using the wilderness; only one wilderness had published wilderness information specifically targeted to people with disabilities. Little exact information was available on visitation by people with disabilities, but numbers were reported from 2,000 to 1 person annually.

One notable response was that 28% of the 210 wilderness managers said that wheelchairs were not allowed in their unit; 66% reported that they were, and 6% didn't know. Forest Service wilderness policy DOES allow wheelchairs. The Forest Service manual 2320.5 (3) states that the prohibition on mechanical transport "does not include wheelchairs."

Based on the information presented, the following recommended ways to improve the accessibility of wilderness conclude this report:

1. Federal wilderness management agencies work together to create one uniform policy for wheelchair use in the NWPS and publish a joint position paper on Wilderness Accessibility for people with disabilities.
2. Provide information and training to agency employees.
3. Explore options for expanding wilderness accessibility through recreation service partners.
4. Encourage wilderness managers to prepare information and literature specifically for the needs of disabled users.
5. Work closely with members of the disabled community to learn what truly-accessible wilderness should be.
6. Expand the realm of opportunities for wilderness experience beyond the boundaries of legal wilderness to include sociological wilderness.

7. Work to increase public understanding of accessibility in outdoor settings, for both wilderness and other recreation sites.

## INTRODUCTION

"The one thing that I keep thinking about  
is how every time I come out and do some Wilderness  
-- or wildland, or whatever you call it -- camping,  
I find out more who I am,  
and I stretch my limits a little bit.  
And I come back usually feeling -- ALWAYS feeling like,  
"Oh, well you know,  
that was no big deal.  
I can do that."  
And then I think, well, you know,  
what else can I do?"  
-- Comments by Sue Singer, a wilderness user with  
cerebral palsy (Journey of Discovery, 1990).

Having a disability changes many things in a person's life. There is no proof that disability changes one aspect of life, and that is a person's need for wild places. Yet some believe that Federal laws, regulations and management practices associated with wilderness inherently discriminate against people with disabilities.

This paper examines those laws and regulations, describes the recent study required by the American's with Disabilities Act, and reviews the findings of a survey of Forest Service wilderness managers as part of that study. It concludes with recommendations to ensure wilderness is managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act, and in a nondiscriminatory way reflective of American societal values.

## ISSUE DEVELOPMENT: SECURING WILDERNESS AND THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### Wilderness -- An Enduring American Resource

In 1964 Congress passed the Wilderness Act (P.L. 88-577) establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The NWPS is made up of lands managed by Federal agencies, including the Forest Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and more recently, the Bureau of Land Management. The NWPS in 1964 included 9.1 million acres in 54 designated wilderness areas; today it includes 94,972,412 acres in 546 units, with the System projected to grow as more areas are added. The NWPS is a significant legacy for present and future generations.

What is wilderness? There is no one answer. At one extreme, wilderness can be defined in a narrow legal perspective as an area possessing qualities outlined in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act:



"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain"

At the other extreme, wilderness is whatever people think it is, as large as the entire universe or as small as one feature on the landscape. This personal definition allows one to find "wilderness" in endless tracts of outer space or in a vacant city lot.

The authors of Wilderness Management call these two extreme definitions **legal wilderness** and **sociological wilderness** (Hendee, Stankey, Lucas, 1990). Finding a universally accepted definition of sociological wilderness seems unlikely because perceptions and beliefs about wilderness vary widely. On the other hand, legal wilderness as defined by the Wilderness Act (Sec. 2c) is much more precise. This definition prescribes conditions for areas in the NWPS and indicates the purposes that management programs for those areas are designed to achieve.

#### The Wilderness Act -- A Landmark of Compromise

It took eight years for the final Wilderness Act to emerge from Congress in 1964. During that time, 65 different wilderness bill were introduced. Eighteen hearings were held across the nation and many thousands of pages of testimony were printed. Many deals were cut and compromises made before the final document was signed. "Wilderness purists" saw the addition of allowable, but nonconforming uses in section (4)c; examples include mining & mineral exploration, livestock grazing, and commercial enterprises necessary for activities that are appropriate in wilderness. Allowable under certain limitations and restrictions, these nonconforming uses are legal, but are generally considered incompatible with the goal of the Act. And on the other side of the issue, "land utilizationists" saw vast tracts of land and their resources being "locked away" when the signature ink was dry.

The primary focus of the Wilderness Act was definition of and creation of the National Wilderness Preservation System (Hendee, Stankey, Lucas, 1990). While it included broad direction for the achievement or maintenance of certain conditions within the NWPS, the Act dealt more strongly with designation than with management. The challenge of wilderness management--to formulate and implement programs that will achieve the objectives underlying the NWPS--was left up to the several federal agencies of responsibility, with their accompanying regulations, policies, and directives.

#### But a Discriminatory Dilemma?

Over the years since its passage, some people have claimed that the Wilderness Act discriminates against the rights of persons with disabilities because it prohibits the use of motorized vehicles, mechanical transport, and other activities within legal wilderness (Wilderness Inquiry, 1992). The prohibition is found in Section 4(c) of the Act, which states:

Except as specifically provided for in this Act...there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or



motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.

When the Wilderness Act was being forged in the early 1960's, the rights of people with disabilities were not part of the national debate (Wilderness Inquiry, 1992). But there is evidence that the architects of the NWPS, those Congressional representatives who deliberated the proposed Wilderness Act in the House Interior Committee in 1964, did have the foresight to question whether or not discrimination was a result of the restrictions in Section 4(c). Notes taken from unedited Committee transcripts record considerations for people, who because of some infirmity, age or health problem, would be unable to hike into wilderness (Beum, 1990). The Representatives considered including in the Act some provision to secure special entry for these people who had special needs. But such an inclusion was not made in the Wilderness Act, apparently for a number of reasons including:

1. Individuals would not be deprived of the full spectrum of wilderness values, even if they could not physically visit the areas. People could get a sample of the experience through movies and books; there is also value in wilderness "because it's there".
2. The important feature of wilderness was that it was set aside and preserved in its natural form, not that everyone has a right to be able to go to every portion. There needed to be balance between the rights of nature and the rights of people to access land.
3. Other forms of access, such as on horseback with a licensed guide service, were noted as ways that people who could not hike could travel in wilderness.

#### Protecting the Rights of People with Disabilities -- An Emerging Issue

At the same time Americans were moving to preserve Wilderness, other trends and concerns were shaping society. The rights of people with disabilities, a movement that continues to increase in size and form, is now commonly recognized as a high priority social concern. As a society we are changing our perceptions of disability. A major change is the realization that people with disabilities are not a small, insignificant part of society. It is estimated that there are between 22 and 75 million Americans with various degrees of disabilities (Lindeborg, 1991).

What is a disability? The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 defines it, with respect to an individual, as (a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; (b) a record of such an impairment; or (c) being regarded as having such an impairment (American with Disabilities Act, 1990). This definition is much more inclusive than the "typical" picture of a person with a disability: a person who uses a wheelchair.

We've learning about what it's like to have a disability. According to a telephone survey of 1,000 Americans with disabilities conducted in 1985, Americans with disabilities face disadvantages in education, income, social life, and daily activities. People with disabilities are not as likely to

finish high school as people in the general population (15% vs 40%). Twice as many people with disabilities have incomes of \$15,000 or less (50% vs 25%). Most non-disabled Americans socialize at least once a week with family and friends (85%), but only three-fourths (75%) of people with disabilities and only two thirds (67%) of individuals with severe disabilities socialize even once a week. (ICD Survey, 1985).

These certainly are people who need relief from the barriers of the "built" environment. The "spiritual freedom" if a wilderness experience would seem beneficial to someone who dealt with barriers imposed by society each day.

As a society we're learning that the issue is more than providing ramps for wheelchairs. It is about giving all Americans the opportunity to exercise choice in their daily lives and activities; to be free from having all choices predetermined by poorly designed facilities or discriminatory practices.

#### A Framework of Law and Regulation

The rights of people with disabilities are protected by a number of far-reaching laws and regulations that affect all segments of society. Two laws in particular have implications for the issue of wilderness use by people with disabilities.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973), as amended by the Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services and Developmental Disabilities Act (1978), adds discrimination because of 'handicap' to prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age and national origin. Section 504 mandates the "accessibility of all programs, services, and facilities provided with Federal dollars"--in simple terms, virtually anything a Federal agency does. Programs must, when viewed in their entirety, be readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. Services available to others must be provided in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of those individuals.

The Department of Agriculture recently issued proposed regulations to clarify and provide for the enforcement of Section 504's federal program and activity requirements (7 CFR Part 15e, Part v). The proposed rules set forth standards for what constitutes discrimination on the basis of mental or physical handicap, provide definitions for whom is protected under the regulations, and establish a complaint mechanism for resolving allegations of discrimination.

These proposed USDA regulations issued last year were published 13 years after the Rehabilitation Act as amended was passed. If there was any compulsion on the part of USDA agencies to wait until the regulations were published before addressing full accessibility, there should be none now! These regulations call for agencies to evaluate their programs within one year, and implement appropriate modifications. A decision NOT to provide access can only be justified on the basis of unreasonable cost, undue administrative burden, or because providing access would fundamentally alter the nature of the program, service or facility.

#### Accessibility ....to Wilderness?



The terms "access" or "accessibility" have different meanings to different people. In the Forest Service, "access" usually means right-of-way, or being able to get to a tract of land. In disability usage, these terms have acquired a legal connotation which the following definition, written by the Forest Service Recreation Accessibility Task Force, will help clarify:

Accessible programs or facilities must offer the person with disability an opportunity to achieve experiences similar to those offered others. Consideration should include persons with visual, hearing, speech, mobility, and developmental impairments. Facilities must be designed so that they can be approached, entered, and used by persons with disabilities. An accessible facility must provide the person with disability a place to park, accessible routes, entrance to buildings, restrooms, water (if provided), and the services offered other visitors. Newly constructed or renovated facilities must comply with Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) (Accessibility Task Force, 1989).

The Task Force definition makes many references to the "built" environment; it is easy to visualize what access means on a city street or in a public building. But wilderness, in contrast, has no parking, buildings or restrooms. Legal wilderness has no or few constructed facilities. To offer access through the building of facilities would, "fundamentally alter the nature of the program", a prohibition of Section 504 itself.

The requirement for wilderness accessibility seems clear, as wilderness is a program of the federal government. But what constitutes "accessibility" in the un-built, natural environment is NOT so clear. Some would go as far to say that legal wilderness, by definition, is inaccessible to people with disabilities. They might speculate whether or not wilderness designation itself is discriminatory.

They might even include that question in law, and they did: in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Public Law 101-336, the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA), was enacted on July 26, 1990 and went into effect January 26, 1992. It is landmark legislation, far-reaching in its protection and the effect it will have on society. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities that are like those provided to individuals on the basis of race, sex, national origin, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991).

In general, ADA does not cover the programs and activities of the federal government. Instead one might illustrate the relationship by explaining that ADA extends to the private sector, the public sector accessibility requirements in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. But ADA will most likely have a profound impact on federal programs as people with disabilities and others awaken to the widened "rights of access" provided in ADA. People will learn to recognize a lack in federal program accessibility as they learn to expect it, under ADA, in the private sector.

Much is made of ADA requirements for employment, transportation and other aspects of everyday life. But little mention is made of the one section of ADA that applies to the federal government, a section specifically addressing the issue of wilderness accessibility.

TITLE V - Miscellaneous Provisions,  
Section 507 of the American's with Disabilities Act of 1990:

FEDERAL WILDERNESS AREAS

(a) Study.--The National Council on Disability shall conduct a study and report on the effect that wilderness designations and wilderness land management practices have on the ability of individuals with disabilities to use and enjoy the NWPS as established under the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.).

(b) Submission of Report.--Not later than 1 year after the enactment of this Act, the National Council on Disability shall submit the report required under subsection (a) to Congress.

(c) Specific Wilderness Access--

(1) In General--Congress reaffirms that nothing in the Wilderness Act is to be construed as prohibiting the use of a wheelchair in a wilderness area by an individual whose disability requires use of a wheelchair, and consistent with the Wilderness Act no agency is required to provide any form of special treatment or accommodation, or to construct any facilities or modify any conditions of lands within a wilderness area to facilitate such use.

(2) Definition--for the purposes of paragraph (1), the term wheelchair means a device designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion, that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area.

The Move to Legislate Accessibility to Wilderness

Origins of ADA Sec. 507, Parts (a) and (b):

As documented in the Congressional Record of the Senate, on September 7, 1989, Senator Hatch of Utah introduced the amendment that would add Sec. 507, parts (a) and (b) to the American's with Disabilities Act (U.S. Congress, 1989). He supported the addition with the following statements:

"While the Federal land managers generally but not always allow individuals in wheelchairs into protected lands, they may only travel a short distance before encountering a barrier that makes it impossible to proceed. I believe we need better to understand the impact of wilderness designation on the disabled." (U.S. Congress, 1989).

The proposed Senate amendment was adopted as Section 507 (a) and (b).

Part (c): Beginnings in another bill:



As documented in the Congressional Record, on October 18, 1989, Senator Hansen of Utah introduced H.R. 3485 into the 1st Session of the 101st Congress (U.S. Congress, 1989). H.R. 3485 was a bill "to amend the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to prohibit discrimination against individuals with respect to entrance to wilderness areas because of a disability." The bill would have added the following new subsection to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act:

"(d) For purposes of subsection (a), no individual may be discriminated against with respect to entrance to wilderness areas because of a disability. A wheelchair may be used in wilderness areas by an individual whose disability requires the use of a wheelchair, notwithstanding section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act."

As written, H.R. 3485 suggested that disabled persons who wished to enter wilderness were somehow discriminated against. It appeared that Senator Hansen's bill, if passed, would have legislated an exception to the general prohibition of mechanical transport found in Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act. But was this necessary? There are several exceptions named right in the Act. Sections 4(c) and 4(d) of the Act provide for numerous exemptions to the general prohibitions on motorized or mechanized travel, as well as on commercial activities, and on roads and other facilities.

But the Act is silent as to wheelchairs, and thus implicitly would prohibit them as forms of mechanized transport.

Apparently someone forgot to mention this to Don Hansen, who, in 1983 with the help of his friends, wheeled his chair 100 miles through the Bob Marshall Wilderness. (The Missoulian, 1991).

It has already been established that the strength of the Wilderness Act lies in the definition of legal wilderness and the creation of the National Wilderness Preservation System, not in directing management of wilderness. H.R. 3485 appeared to ignore the various regulations and policies of the federal agencies (whose programs IN TOTAL are already covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act), and how these directives defined wilderness management. The strength of agency regulations is in managing to keep wilderness wild, while allowing for the "use and enjoyment of the American people", as also called for in the Wilderness Act (Sec. 2a).

In an attachment to a letter mailed to Congressional Representatives in November, 1989, The Wilderness Society summarized the policies of the federal agencies that managed wilderness in reference to allowance of wheelchairs (The Wilderness Society, 1989). A brief report of that summary follows:

Federal Agency Policy on Wheelchair Access in Wilderness  
(The Wilderness Society, 1989)

USDI National Park Service: Section 6:8 of Management Policies: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1988, as follows:  
"Mobility impaired persons may use wheelchairs (as defined in 36 CFR 1.4) in wilderness."  
The definition in 36 CFR 1.4 included both mechanical and motorized wheelchairs.

**USDA Forest Service:** Forest Service Manual, Section 2320.5 (3) documents a prohibition on mechanical transport in wilderness, which "does not include wheelchairs when used as necessary medical appliances."

**USDI Bureau of Land Management:** In a letter to Representative Rhodes dated October 13, 1989, BLM Director Cy Jamison stated: "As a policy exception, the BLM does not prohibit the use of wheelchairs by persons with mobility impairments in the wilderness"

The BLM is currently in the process of clarifying its policies, and reports the intention to adopt a similar policy to that of the National Park Service (Wilderness Inquiry, 1992).

**USDI Fish and Wildlife Service:** The Fish and Wildlife Service does not have a current policy statement on this issue, but intends to adopt a policy similar to that of the other land managing agencies within the Department of the Interior.

Based on the above policy statements, it appeared to The Wilderness Society that "wheelchair access and use are clearly permitted in wilderness" (The Wilderness Society, 1989). H.R. 3485 appeared to be unnecessary legislation.

#### An Amendment to ADA

H.R. 3485 did not become law, but to some the need was apparently still there. As reported in the Congressional Record on May 17, 1990, an amendment was introduced to the American's with Disabilities Act, which was currently under House debate (U.S. Congress, 1990). The amendment included the major points of H.R. 3485. The amendment was proposed by Senator Hansen of Utah, and was subsequently modified by Congressman Vento of Minnesota. The Hansen/Vento amendment to the ADA passed the House on a unanimous vote, and was added to Section 507 of the ADA.

The Congressional Record of May 17, 1990 documents discussions surrounding the amendment. While all Congressional representatives spoke in support of the amendment, a variety of views emerge in their comments. Congressman Vento who revised the Hansen amendment, spoke in strong support, but almost as if the amendment were unnecessary:

"People whose disabilities require the use of wheelchairs are not prohibited from entering wilderness areas, and agency rules and policies recognize this today. The amendment being offered now....reaffirms the provisions of the Wilderness Act and the rules and regulations of the management agencies. Many Americans with disabilities enjoy and use wilderness areas without any special accommodation or exception to the 1964 Wilderness Act." (U.S. Congress, 1990).

Vento saw the amendment as a reaffirmation of good agency policies and the existing use that people with disabilities were making of Wilderness.

Mr. Lewis of California saw the amendment working to correct existing discrimination:



"There is a concern that there are those who would like to essentially close down millions of acres to disabled people and not allow them access by way of eliminating the language in the interpretation of wilderness."

He also noted that this amendment to the ADA would not end the debate:

"..this bill should focus on the fact that some people in their definition of wilderness would literally close down effective access for older Americans and disabled Americans, especially those who happen to need wheelchairs. Maybe we will have to fight that battle another day..."

It is also significant that the ADA reaffirmed that, "no agency is required to provide any form of special treatment or accommodation, or to construct any facilities or modify any conditions of lands within a wilderness to facilitate such use." The direction from Congress is somewhat mixed; wheelchairs should be permitted, but no trails need be constructed for their use. Certainly federal agencies can come up with more genuine and workable solutions to the accessibility of wilderness.

The ADA section is also specific in its provision for wheelchair use; it does not address the wide range of impairments that are not mobility related. People with hearing or sight, learning or other impairment must be included in our programs too.

#### THE ADA STUDY OF WILDERNESS DESIGNATION, USE AND MANAGEMENT

##### The "wilderness" of Jackson Lake Lodge

When the ADA was signed, the National Council on Disability was assigned to conducting the study and prepare the report to Congress as required in Section 507 (a). On August 7, 1990, the Council conducted a hearing on access into designated Wilderness for people with disabilities. The hearing was held at the splendid facility of Jackson Lake Lodge near Jackson, Wyoming. A report of the hearing was prepared by Chuck Frayer, Region 6 Accessibility Specialist, who represented the Forest Service at the hearing.

The National Council heard testimony from four panels which consisted of government agencies, consumers, organizations and facilities, and preservation and conservation associations. Each panelist had 15 minutes to give testimony. Frayer reports that there was little reaction by the Council to the testimonies. This may have been due to an observation he makes in the summary of his report:

"This hearing is the first of several and there is a lot of education that is needed for the National Council and panel members before the Council can give their report to Congress in a year. All of the Council members thought that the Jackson Lake Lodge was truly in wilderness." (Frayer, 1990).

Little apparent progress was made on the study and report after that hearing, until the National Council on Disabilities contracted with Wilderness Inquiry in early 1991. Wilderness Inquiry, a non-profit organization headquartered in Minneapolis, MN, has conducted trips for over 5,000 participants since 1978

(Wilderness Inquiry, 1990). The organization's focus is clearly stated in its Mission Statement:

"To provide active outdoor adventure opportunities that integrate people with and without disabilities in experiences that inspire personal growth, develop peer relationships, and enhance awareness of the environment."

Members of Wilderness Inquiry were qualified to conduct a study on wilderness use by people with disabilities; they had been in that business for 13 years. They also know the issue went beyond whether or not you could roll a wheelchair up a wilderness trail.

Wilderness Inquiry completed the draft Report to Congress in January 1992 for presentation to the National Council, as agreed to in the contract. Public and Congressional reactions to the final report are not yet available.

### The Organization of the ADA Study

Wilderness Inquiry organized the study into three data gathering components: 1) Outfitters and organizations; 2) persons with disabilities; and 3) NWPS managers (Wilderness Inquiry, 1992). In partnership with them, this project was started to assist with the development of the survey instrument to collect information and responses from NWPS managers, and to conduct the survey and analysis of Forest Service wilderness managers responses. The following section reports that survey of Forest Service wilderness managers.

### NWPS UNIT MANAGERS QUESTIONNAIRE

#### REPORT OF FOREST SERVICE RESPONSES

#### Questionnaire Distribution, Return and Tabulation

The questionnaire (appendix A) was sent via electronic mail to Regional Wilderness Specialists in the Regional Offices of the nine National Forest Regions. These Specialists then distributed the questionnaire via electronic mail to wilderness managers in National Forests throughout their respective Regions. The questionnaires were to be returned to Liz Close at the Northern Region regional office by September 30, 1991. Several Regions requested and were granted an extension; questionnaires were received in the Northern Regional Office through November 7, 1991. Most responses came through electronic mail; about 8 percent were mailed as print copies.

#### Description of Returns

A total of 210 questionnaires were returned, representing comments from 283 Wildernesses managed by the Forest Service. This is 77 percent of the 365 units of the National Wilderness Preservation System managed by the Forest Service. No attempt was made to follow-up with those units who did not respond.

All 210 responses were from employees of the USDA Forest Service.



A list of wildernesses included in the survey is found in Appendix B. The average number of wildernesses included on one returned questionnaire was two. The highest number reported on one questionnaire was eight.

Respondents were asked how long they had managed that Wilderness. The longest time reported was 23 years, the shortest one month. The average length of time reported by respondents was 5.4 years.

There was considerable variation in how information was reported. Some questionnaires were returned by people managing a portion of one Wilderness, other questionnaires reported for as many as eight Wildernesses on one form. It is therefore difficult to isolate any response as "the word" from any one wilderness. The information collected is best viewed as a composite of the wilderness under Forest Service management.

#### Data Tabulation and Reporting

The information from the questionnaires was entered into an Oracle database on the Forest Service Data General computer system. The information included in this report is from queries of that data base.

#### Tabulation of Information from Questionnaires:

##### 1. How would you describe the PRIMARY terrain type in your wilderness unit used by visitors interested in recreation?

<u>Primary Terrain</u>	<u>Percent of Responses</u>
Mountainous:	73%
Forest:	16%
Lake and/or River:	5%
Swamp and/or Wetland:	3%
Coastal:	3%
Desert:	less than 1%

Comment: It is no surprise to anyone that National Forest Wilderness is primarily rugged, mountainous terrain. Many managers commented that the terrain was the primary inhibitor to people with disabilities, not wilderness designation or accompanying management policies.

##### 2. People who visit your wilderness unit use which of the following means of travel?

<u>Means of Travel</u>	<u>Percent of Responses</u>
Hike:	95%
Horse:	81%
Ski:	34%
Canoe:	17%
Kayak:	16%
Raft:	13%
Airplane:	8%

Motorboat: 8%  
Other (includes 6%  
bicycle, ATV, cruise ship,  
snowmobile, snowshoes, dog sled)

Comments: Respondents could check as many as applied. The use of motors and airplanes are commonly not considered regular means of wilderness travel, but a number of wildernesses have such exceptions included in the legislation establishing that wilderness. One such example is the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act, which allows the use of motorized travel in Alaskan wilderness. Others reported means of travel such as "bicycles" then footnoted them, "ILLEGAL!! But it happens..."

3. Have you received inquiries from persons with disabilities about the use of your wilderness unit?

No: 56%  
Yes: 32%  
Don't Know: 24%

4. If YES, approximately how many inquiries do you receive annually?

Of those who answered the question, the range of number of inquiries went from 50 to 1. The average number of inquiries annually was 5.

5. How many people with disabilities do you believe use your unit of the NWPS each year?

Eighty-five percent of the respondents answered this question. By far the largest number reported was from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area with an estimated 2,000 disabled users annually. This value was so much higher than the other responses it was omitted from the group when calculating the average number reported. The average of the responses was 46 people with disabilities visiting a wilderness annually. The lowest number reported was 1 person annually.

Only 2 responses reported that this answer was based on exact documentation; the rest were estimated numbers of users.

6. Does your wilderness unit have any information available that specifically addresses wilderness use by persons with disabilities?

Only 2 responded YES to this question. One of them mentioned information about facilities OUTSIDE the wilderness, at developed recreation sites. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area was the only unit that sent in their brochure, "Disabled Visitors' Guide to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness", which is issued by the Superior National Forest.

Comments: Several respondents included notes asking to be send any examples of information received in response to this question. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area brochure should be made available as a good example of what can be produced.

7. How do people with disabilities travel while in your wilderness unit?

<u>Mode of Travel</u>	<u>Percent of Responses</u>
Hike:	82%
Horse:	73%
Other:	13% (includes wheelchair, snowshoe, dogsled, cruise ship, ATV, bicycle)
Raft:	9%
Canoe:	8%
Motorboat:	8%
Ski:	8%
Airplane:	7%
Kayak:	5%

Eighty percent of the respondents answered this question and could select as many modes of travel as they desired.

When asked in other questions, respondents described the information they gave as estimates or "W.A.G's". This question did not ask whether the answer was based on exact information or an estimate, but one could assume most responses were estimated. The low percentages given to "water-based" travel for people with disabilities are compared below to the responses given for not-specifically disabled visitors in question 2:

#### Means of Travel

<u>Visitors (ques. 2)</u>		<u>Disabled Visitors (ques. 7)</u>	
Canoe	17%	Canoe	8%
Kayak	16%	Kayak	5%
Raft	13%	Raft	9%

In her article, "Water: The ultimate equalizer", Janet Zeller describes how water travel offers a much more accessible route than land travel in outdoor settings (Zeller, 1990). She wrote that one disabled recreator said that when he is paddling he has "the sense of feeling able. I am out in nature and away from my chair, I have the thrill of the sport, and I get some great exercise." It is probably no accident that the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, where water is the primary travel route, has the most well-developed program of wilderness accessibility. Federal wilderness managers should investigate water travel as a proven alternative to the wheelchair/wilderness trail problem.

#### Do you believe most people with disabilities visit your wilderness unit:

<u>Grouping</u>	<u>Percent of Responses</u>
With Family/Friends:	64%
Don't Know	27%
In Organized Groups:	21%

Ninety-two percent of the respondents answered this question. Only one person responded "alone". Four responded this answer was based on exact documentation; the rest said it was an estimate or left this inquiry blank.



9. Do most people without disabilities visit your wilderness unit:

<u>Grouping</u>	<u>Percent of Responses</u>
With Family/Friends:	95%
In Organized Groups:	23%
Alone:	8%
Don't Know:	less than 1%

While most of these responses were still estimates, 35 percent of those who responded said their answer was based on exact documentation.

10. Does your unit allow for the use of wheelchairs by persons with disabilities?

Yes: 66%  
No: 28%  
Don't Know: 6%

Comments: The wording on this question may have "confused" the way Forest Service employees answered it. The first is the use of the word "unit", which in the Forest Service refers to the Ranger District or Forest of which the Wilderness is a part. Forest Service employees typically don't refer to a Wilderness as a "unit" of the National Wilderness Preservation System, even though they understand it is. Some respondents wrote questions like, "Do you mean in wilderness?" beside their answer, indicating that they didn't realize this question was asked of the wilderness alone.

The second confusing word is "allow". Two interpretations can be made: 1) agency policy allows wheelchairs; 2) special provisions are made for wheelchair use. The first interpretation is what was intended to be asked with this question; some respondents clearly answered the second. An example is one respondent who answered "No" to the question, then write, "Our policy says that wheelchairs can use the Wilderness, but we don't build trails for them." If this respondent had answered the question as intended, her/his answer should have been "Yes".

It has already been established that Forest Service policy for wilderness management allows for the use of wheelchairs. This allowance will be clarified and emphasized in the following statement, which is part of the revised Forest Service Manual draft:

"Mechanical apparatus that is medically necessary for the basic mobility of any individual is considered to be part of that person and not subject to restrictions on mechanical use."

-- (draft) Forest Service Manual, 2326.03 no. 4

Even allowing for confusion resulting from how the question was asked, it is still disturbing that nearly one-third of the respondents answered "NO". One would expect that a fair share of these people would give the same response to a member of the general public, the press, or a Congressional inquiry. This may explain why some believe wheelchair use should be legislated in wilderness, not just left up to agency



regulations. The policy solution so far has not resulted in the practical exception to the prohibition on mechanical transport that is sought.

11. Does your unit make special provisions for use by persons with disabilities?

No: 81%  
Yes: 15%  
Don't know: 4%

Comments: Even though only 15 percent answered "Yes"; comments made on the responses indicate that this percentage should probably be even smaller. Once again there was confusion over the meaning of the word "unit". Some clearly indicated that the special provisions were OUTSIDE the Wilderness in developed recreation areas.

Those that answered "Yes" listed provisions made including special permits and use of motors, which are generally not provided specifically to better accommodate people with disabilities, but for ALL users of wilderness. One example is the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act provision of the use of motors in that state.

Provisions mentioned that specifically target use by people with disabilities include accessible facilities at wilderness trailheads (such facilities are outside the actually wilderness boundary) and two examples of trails improved to a standard to better accommodate wheelchairs.

12. In your opinion, do wilderness management policies of your agency for NWPS units inhibit the enjoyment of persons with disabilities?

No 77%  
Yes 23%

Comments: Ninety-four percent of the respondents answered this question. Of those who answered "Yes", that agency wilderness policy does inhibit the enjoyment of persons with disabilities, some apparently did not understand what the existing policy was. One example is that several indicated that wheelchairs were prohibited from wilderness:

"The Wilderness Act prohibits the use of wheelchairs and the trails aren't up to the standards for wheelchair use. We don't have information on other options such as horse rental from local residents."

"Mechanized equipment is still illegal in wilderness."

"Wilderness management restrictions are more restrictive to the disabled because, as a whole, access would cause unacceptable disturbance."

Others cited trail standards inappropriate for wheelchair passage, although trail standards themselves are not "wilderness policy":

"We do not provide accessible trails for persons with disabilities. Our wilderness trails are much less than could be used by handicap folks."

"Trails are not constructed or maintained with the disabled in mind."

"Maintained trails are cleared to an 18" width."

Some respondents marked "YES", then referred to inherent discrimination in legal wilderness as defined by the Act:

"Based on the way they interpret the intent of Congress in designating wilderness. They feel that if someone cannot meet the challenge of wilderness they should go somewhere else. They are purists when it comes to wilderness."

"Our wilderness is not a user friendly place for anyone. No provisions have been made to aid access for anyone. In this regard, we may be inhibiting the enjoyment of the area for persons with disabilities."

"Just by the inherent nature of wilderness (it's generally large acreage, inaccessible, rugged etc.), many people will not be able to reach all areas of a wilderness. This includes the young, the elderly, the out-of-shape, and some of the disabled, (if they are not able to ride a horse)."

Those who answered "No" generally commented that they understood wilderness presented substantial challenges or even barriers to the enjoyment of people with disabilities. But they saw these challenges as inherent in the definition and nature of "Wilderness" and not created by Agency policy:

"One must first understand that NWPS units are not meant for everyone's enjoyment. Even people with disabilities must know their own limitations and impose their own constraints."

"Access is available with the aid of friends and/or animals, and we believe the disabled realize that wilderness areas are special and that some extra effort will be necessary."

"Our policies don't inhibit, but the terrain might if the disability is physical. Our trails head straight up."

"Many disabilities do not limit a person's ability to enter the area by acceptable means. Also, much about wilderness can be "enjoyed" without physical presence."

Some also mentioned that policy did not prohibit Forest Service employees from searching for ways to improve opportunities for enjoyment of wilderness by people with disabilities; low wilderness budgets, staffing levels, and other pressing priorities did:



"I don't think it has anything to do with policy, but rather a lack of time and funding. I have found support consistent when I have tried programs for accessibility."

"By policy, probably not, by practice especially. The limited \$\$ for trail maintenance may be inhibiting some people with disabilities."

"I believe the agency is progressive in planning and looking to the future. To accomplish the actual work it takes to provide accurate information, "Rec. Opportunity Guide" and converting facilities at trailheads, minor relocation, feasibility, etc. costs \$\$\$\$."

"Persons with disabilities not inhibited by policy but by lack of funding for facilities. This unit plans on constructing a new trailhead in '92 with equestrian facilities for the disabled."

Some responded with considerable insight and experience and suggestions for improvement:

"I have no doubt that we could better encourage use of Wilderness areas by visitors having disabilities by learning more of their needs/desires."

"We have disabled people sign up as clients of guides, part of groups, etc. and they have no problem using the wilderness, Where wheelchairs are concerned, we have little terrain that is suitable. This is a result of a tradition of designating rock and ice wildernesses that tend to be rugged and difficult to access. If there is any gentle-terrain wildland left, with opportunities to develop gentle trails and water routes, those would be targeted for wilderness designation with disabled access in mind."

"The people we talk to don't want special treatment. They want the challenge of the wilderness but would appreciate better accessible toilets. Much of the use by disabled persons is by float boat trips. We have accommodated several outfitters with this program."

"The \_\_\_\_ NF has a lot of backcountry that can be accessed with motorized equipment so we are not denying individuals an opportunity to experience a wilderness-type environment."

13. Do you provide any of the following to the general population prior to their visiting wilderness areas?

<u>Service</u>	<u>Percent of Responses</u>
Advice:	87%
Informational	
wilderness travel materials:	86%
Other: (included "no trace"	
camping literature,	17%
maps, personal contacts at trailheads)	
Training:	7%

18. Please elaborate on what could be done:

Most people took the time to respond to this question; attempts to summarize these answers didn't adequately capture all of the content and suggestions. The responses have been included in Appendix C, and many of the suggestions form the basis of the recommendations of this report. Some emphasized that altering Wilderness to accommodate ANY group of users would destroy Wilderness. Others saw an enhancement of outfitter/guide services as one way for people with disabilities to have better access to a wilderness experience. Many expressed the frustration they felt at wanting to do SOMETHING but not knowing WHAT.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested actions for the USDA Forest Service, as based on the information collected in the Forest Service wilderness managers survey for the ADA study. These recommendations may also be applicable to other federal agencies that manage units of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

1. **Work with the other wilderness management agencies to:**

- a. **Create consistent policy for wheelchair use in the NWPS.** Ensure the policy agrees with ADA, which defines a wheelchair as "a device designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion, that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area." This may mean a change in Forest Service policy (which currently disallows MOTORIZED wheelchairs) and will require the Fish & Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management to issue formal policy where they currently have none.
- b. **Publish a joint position paper on wilderness accessibility for people with disabilities.** Clarify agency positions; deal specifically with intent, practices and provisions. There are many actions we can agree to now, or have already agreed to in other parts of our agency programs. For example it can be stated that the agencies intend to make all trailhead facilities on the edge of the wilderness boundary, accessible. It can also be agreed that accurate wilderness information will be available via text telephones for hearing impaired individuals. Both of these actions improve the accessibility of wilderness, but would have no direct detrimental effect on the physical wilderness resource under our stewardship.

The position paper should also give definition to what Congress reaffirmed in the ADA, that "no agency is required to provide any form of special treatment or accommodation, or to construct any facilities or modify any conditions of lands within a wilderness area to facilitate such use (by people with disabilities)."

2. **Provide information and training to agency employees; target first those directly responsible for wilderness management and those who deal with public contact.** Wilderness accessibility should also be incorporated into the larger body of training currently underway to enable the Forest Service to meet Section 504 requirements. Clarify agency policy; ensure it is clear what it means to "allow wheelchairs" in Wilderness. Clarify agency position; we are not



trying to defend Wilderness against an on-slot of disabled users, but are working to build a better base of support and appreciation for Wilderness among all segments of society.

3. **Explore options for expanding Wilderness access through recreation service partners.** This does not mean increasing "outfitted trips" in areas that have already reached their ecological limits for human visitation and impact, but encouraging existing services to expand their knowledge and "comfort level" in serving people with disabilities. Some organizations like Wilderness Inquiry specialize in such trips and could teach others. Some outfitters have already branched out into trips for the disabled on their own; they can also be used as examples and teachers for others. We can work with outfitters and recreation service partners through their professional organizations and societies and licensing boards, and should ask to include this topic in upcoming society meetings.

4. **Encourage wilderness managers to prepare information and literature specifically for the needs of disabled users.** This will make public our intent and program focus, and will encourage wilderness managers to explore the options and opportunities as they prepare the information. The Disabled Visitors' Guide to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (Superior National Forest, 1985), is a good example of what can be done. This guide includes useful information for trip planning and enjoyment, maps of routes and sites on gentle, easy terrain, and organizations (like Wilderness Inquiry) who help people with disabilities use wilderness. One would have difficulty writing more appropriate advice than the following from the Guide:

**AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONS OF ALL ABILITIES--**

Wilderness travel is physically demanding but need not be an endurance test. The best wilderness trip is usually one tailored to one's own interests and abilities. Wilderness activities offer great opportunities for personal growth. Requirements for making use of them are few. Being "able-bodied" is not one of them. A successful trip should challenge your capabilities, test your limits, and this, expand your confidence." (Superior National Forest, 1985.)

5. **Work closely with members of the disabled community to learn what truly accessible wilderness should be.** Ensure the debate is expanded beyond the too-often asked questions about wheelchairs; what do we have to offer those who are hearing or sight impaired, or mentally disabled? Working directly with the people the program should be accessible for will ensure our solutions work, or at least are on the right track. It will also teach us about the diversity among the disabled, from the people with disabilities who currently use wilderness and encourage wilderness managers to change nothing, to the disabled person who wrote the following in a letter to the editor:

"In a society that is supposed to give consideration, the wilderness crowd has consistently refused to listen to this voice. Those like myself cannot use or even see the wilderness areas except from a distance. Of course, to those in this area who support shutting off these vast and many areas consider the handicapped as totally without consideration. One told me, "well, that is too damn bad, but wilderness is wilderness, if you cannot walk into it stay out!"

"I consider this an insult and a total violation of my rights, which according to the wilderness notes I do not have! Those who will be returning from the Gulf War will also be treated the same as the rest of the handicapped.

"Rep. Marlenee tried to get a motorized path into one wilderness area but it was put down by those selfish and narrow-minded people who know only a few ever use these areas. Yet, they say this is a free land! To whom?" (Preston, 1990).

People with disabilities WANT direct involvement. For one thing, it will enable them to stop their needs from being used as a "political football" in the pro-wilderness/against-wilderness debate. Some people with disabilities make it a point to speak out when they sense this is the case. In a reaction to published remarks by a senator's aide, who said the senator opposes some proposed additions to the NWPS because he wants seniors and the handicapped to have better access to those areas, a half-dozen senior and handicapped citizens held a press conference to voice their opposing view. They uniformly denounced the senator's "condescending attitude" and spoke for themselves. "I really don't find sincerity in Burns' advocating more access," said June Ash, a wilderness user who has hiked with a leg brace for many years. "I kind of resent the politicians talking for us when they don't know anything about it."

Others hinted at what the more genuine motivation might be. "I'm a firm believer in the philosophy of wilderness," said Don Hansen, a wilderness and wheelchair user, "It seems to me that only reason they want this is for the timber industry to cut more trees." (Schwennesen, 1991.)

6. **Expand the realm of opportunities for wilderness experience beyond the boundaries of legal wilderness to include sociological wilderness.** One approach to this may include "wilderness trips" into non-designated roadless areas where a wilderness-like environment is found. In such "de facto-wilderness" we are not faced with the same prohibitions as found in the Wilderness Act, and have more options for transportation and facility construction.

Another approach to this sort of expansion is to develop ways to communicate the value and experience of wilderness beyond the need to visit wilderness to feel it. The pay-off would be great. This approach would be to make wilderness accessible not only to the disabled but to an even larger segment of society--those "able-bodied" Americans who will never set foot in wilderness themselves. As wilderness managers we have too long neglected the wilderness needs of the vast the majority of Americans who do not visit wilderness. We have thought these people are not our "customers", not our concern. While we've been attending to the few, those wilderness visitors who impact the wilderness with their campfires and horses, the majority of Americans have been impacting wilderness by withholding the collective strength of their loyalty and support.

7. **Work to increase public understanding of accessibility in outdoor settings, for both wilderness and other recreation sites.**

Unless they have confronted the issue directly, many people have not formed opinions or understanding about accessibility in "America's Great Outdoors." As our programs evolve, public education will be the key to public



support. It will also provide a needed broadening of accessibility needs from urban setting to include the more complete world in which we live.

Wilderness has been handicapped by an elitist label that makes many think it is not a resource for them. The stereotypic wilderness user is young, attractive, athletic, wealthy, leisured, citified (Stankey, 1990). This stereotype is largely untrue, but is common in discussions as diverse as congressional testimony on wilderness classification proposals and barroom arguments in small towns near wilderness. Based on these inaccurate but common misconceptions, it is easy to convince people that wilderness indeed discriminates, or at least convince Congress that this issue should be studied. Unless we expand the value of Wilderness to all Americans, we may continue to see legislated solutions to problems that are better addressed in other ways. These solutions may represent the largest threat to keeping wilderness "wild".

"As long as I'm in a wild setting  
It can be Wilderness, or somewhere else,  
I just enjoy it.  
And I think it is a great equalizer of people  
Both in terms of physical abilities and also, you know  
the differences between people's educations  
or their socioeconomic levels  
or whatever, disappear.  
Because when you're all out here  
with one sleeping bag  
one bag of clothing and, you know  
one life jacket  
The rain gets you all wet  
Equally."

(Journey of Discovery, 1990)



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APPENDIX A. LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE SURVEY OF FOREST SERVICE  
WILDERNESS MANAGERS.

Wilderness, Recreation and  
Cultural Resources Staff  
Northern Regional Office  
September 11, 1991

Dear Wilderness Manager,

We want to find out what level of use, if any, the Wilderness area you manage receives from persons with disabilities.

You may know that Congress passed the Americans With Disabilities Act in 1990. In that Act, the National Council on Disability was mandated to conduct a nationwide study examining the effect that wilderness designations and wilderness land management practices have on the ability of persons with disabilities to use and enjoy the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The National Council on Disability is working with Wilderness Inquiry to conduct this study. Wilderness Inquiry is a non-profit, Minneapolis based organization that conducts wilderness adventures with persons who have disabilities. I am assisting them by collecting and compiling this information for Forest Service wildernesses. I will also use this information for my Recreation Short Course project.

Enclosed is an informal questionnaire designed for wilderness managers. This same questionnaire will be used to collect information from National Park Service, BLM, and Fish & Wildlife Service-managed wildernesses. We understand that you may not have hard data on many of the questions asked in this questionnaire. If you do not have hard data, please respond according to your best judgement.

Please take a moment to complete the questionnaire and return it to me by September 30th, 1991.

If you have questions concerning the study, please contact me (406-329-3587/FTS:585-3587) or Greg Lais at Wilderness Inquiry (612-379-3858). Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

/s/ LIZ CLOSE

Liz Close (L.CLOSE:R01A)  
Wilderness Specialist  
Northern Region



\*\*\*\* PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO L.CLOSE:R01A BY SEPT. 30 \*\*\*\*  
or mail to: Liz Close, WRRC, Northern Region, P.O. Box 7669,  
Missoula, MT. 59807

NWPS Unit Managers Questionnaire  
Wilderness Access

The National Wilderness Preservation System was established by Congress in passing the Wilderness Act to 1964. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires a study to determine the ability of persons with disabilities to enjoy and utilize the National Wilderness Preservation System. You have been identified as a person involved in managing a unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Your assistance in completing this questionnaire is greatly appreciated!

1. How would you describe the primary terrain type in your wilderness unit used by visitors interested in recreation? (check only one)

<input type="checkbox"/> mountainous	<input type="checkbox"/> lake and/or river
<input type="checkbox"/> swamp, marsh wetland	<input type="checkbox"/> desert
<input type="checkbox"/> forest/heavily vegetated	<input type="checkbox"/> coastal

2. People who visit your wilderness unit use which of the following means of travel? (check all those that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> raft	<input type="checkbox"/> kayak	<input type="checkbox"/> motorboat
<input type="checkbox"/> canoe	<input type="checkbox"/> hike	<input type="checkbox"/> bicycle
<input type="checkbox"/> horse	<input type="checkbox"/> dogsled	<input type="checkbox"/> airplane
<input type="checkbox"/> ski	<input type="checkbox"/> snowmobile	<input type="checkbox"/> all terrain vehicle

☐ Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Persons with disabilities include those who use wheelchairs, crutches, canes and those who have visual and/or hearing impairments, mental retardation, epilepsy, etc.

3. Have you ever received inquiries from persons with disabilities about the use of your wilderness unit?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

4. If yes, approximately how many inquiries do you receive annually? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this figure an: ☐ estimate  
☐ based on exact documentation

5. How many people with disabilities do you believe use your unit of the NWPS each year? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this figure an: \_\_\_\_\_ estimate  
\_\_\_\_\_ based on exact documentation

6. Does your wilderness unit have any information available that specifically addresses wilderness use by persons with disabilities?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

IF YES, PLEASE RETURN TWO COPIES WITH THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

7. How do people with disabilities travel while in your wilderness unit?  
(check all that apply)

_____raft	_____kayak	_____motorboat
_____canoe	_____hike	_____bicycle
_____horse	_____dogsled	_____airplane
_____ski	_____snowmobile	_____all terrain vehicle

\_\_\_\_\_Other (please describe)\_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you believe most people with disabilities visit your wilderness unit:

\_\_\_\_\_Alone  
\_\_\_\_\_With family/friends  
\_\_\_\_\_In organized groups  
\_\_\_\_\_Don't know

Is this response an: \_\_\_\_\_ estimate  
\_\_\_\_\_ based on exact documentation

9. Do most people without disabilities visit your wilderness unit:

\_\_\_\_\_Alone  
\_\_\_\_\_With family/friends  
\_\_\_\_\_In organized groups  
\_\_\_\_\_Don't know

Is this response an: \_\_\_\_\_ estimate  
\_\_\_\_\_ based on exact documentation

10. Does your unit allow for the use of wheelchairs by persons with disabilities?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

11. Does your unit make special provisions for use by persons with disabilities?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what are they? (check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ Special permits  
\_\_\_\_\_ Use of motors  
\_\_\_\_\_ Special areas  
\_\_\_\_\_ Accessibility information  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. In your opinion, do the management policies of your agency for NWPS units inhibit the enjoyment of persons with disabilities?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you provide any of the following to the general population prior to their visiting wilderness areas?

\_\_\_\_\_ advice  
\_\_\_\_\_ informational wilderness travel materials  
\_\_\_\_\_ special training  
\_\_\_\_\_ other

14. What is the official name of the unit(s) of the NWPS that you manage?  
(please list them all if more than one)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. For which Federal agency do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

16. What is your official job title? \_\_\_\_\_

17. How many years have you personally been involved in the management of this wilderness area? \_\_\_\_\_



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

APPENDIX B. LIST OF WILDERNESSES INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY  
BY NATIONAL FOREST REGION AND STATE:

Region One - Northern Region: (11)

Idaho

Selway-Bitterroot (3) (the # in () indicates how many responses were  
FCRONR - Listed in R4 returned for that Wilderness)

Montana

Absaroka-Beartooth (2)  
Anaconda-Pintlar  
Cabinet Mountains (2)  
Great Bear  
Lee Metcalf  
Mission Mountains  
Rattlesnake  
Scapegoat (3)  
Selway-Bitterroot - Listed with Idaho  
Welcome Creek

Region Two - Rocky Mountain Region (33)

Colorado

Big Blue (2)  
Collegiate Peaks (3)  
Eagles Nest  
Flat Tops (3)  
Holy Cross (3)  
Hunter Fryingpan (2)  
Indian Peaks  
La Garita  
Lizard Head  
Lost Creek  
Maroon Bells-Snowmass (3)  
Mount Massive  
Mount Sneffels  
Mount Zirkel (2)  
Neota  
Never Summer (2)  
Platte River  
Raggeds (2)  
Rawah  
South San Juan (2)  
Weminuche (2)  
West Elk (2)

South Dakota

Black Elk

Wyoming

Absaroka-Beartooth  
Cloud Peak (2)  
Encampment River  
Fitzpatrick  
Huston Park  
North Absaroka  
Platte River  
Popo Agie  
Savage Run  
Washakie



Region Three - Southwestern Region (38)

Arizona

Apache Creek  
Bear Wallow  
Chiricahua  
Escudilla  
Four Peaks (3)  
Hellsgate  
Juniper Mesa  
Kachina Peaks  
Kanab Creek  
Kendrick Mountain (2)  
Mazatzal (4)  
Mount Wrightson  
Munds Mountain  
Pajarita  
Pine Mountain (2)  
Pusch Ridge  
Red Rock-Secret Mountain (2)  
Rincon Mountain  
Saddle Mountain  
Salome (2)  
Salt River Canyon (2)  
Sierra Ancha  
Strawberry Crater  
Superstition (3)  
Sycamore Canyon (3)  
Woodchute

New Mexico

Aldo Leopold (3)  
Apache Kid  
Blue Range (2)  
Capitan Mountain  
Choma River Canyon  
Cruces Basin  
Gila (9)  
Manzano Mountain  
Pecos (5)  
San Pedro Parks (2)  
Sandia Mountain  
White Mountain  
Withington

Region Four - Intermountain Region (22)

Idaho

Frank Church-River of No Return (5)  
Jedediah Smith  
Sawtooth  
Winegar Hole

Nevada

Current Mountain  
East Humboldts  
Grant Range  
Jarbridge  
Mt. Moriah  
Quinn Canyon  
Ruby Mountains  
Santa Rosa - Paradise Peak

Utah

Box Death Hollow  
Dark Canyon  
Lone Peak  
Mount Naomi  
Mount Nebo  
Mount Timpanagos  
Wellsville Mountain

Wyoming

Bridger  
Gros Ventre  
Teton

**Region Five - Pacific Southwest Region (29)**

California

Agua Tibia	Machesna Mountain
Ansel Adams (2)	Marble Mountain
Carson-Iceberg	Mokelumne
Chanchelulia	Monarch
Desolation	Red Buttes
Dick Smith	Russian
Dinkey Lakes	San Rafael
Dome Land	Santa Lucia
Emigrant	Siskiyou (3)
Golden Trout (2)	South Sierra (2)
Granite Chief	South Warner
Hoover	Thousand Lakes
Jennie Lakes	Trinity Alps (3)
John Muir (2)	Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel
Kaiser	

**Region Six - Pacific Northwest Region (52)**

Oregon

Badger Creek (2)  
Black Canyon  
Boulder Creek  
Bridge Creek  
Bull of the Woods  
Cummins Creek  
Diamond Peak (3)  
Drift Creek  
Gearhart Mountain  
Grassy Knob (2)  
Hells Canyon  
Kalmiopsis  
Menagerie  
Middle Santiam  
Mill Creek  
Monument Rock  
Mount Jefferson  
Mount Thielsen (2)  
Mountain Lakes  
North Fork John Day (3)  
North Fork Umatilla  
Red Buttes (2)  
Rock Creek  
Rogue-Umpqua Divide  
Salmon-Huckleberry  
Sky Lakes  
Three Sisters (3)  
Waldo Lake  
Wenoha-Tucannon (2)  
Wild Rogue (2)

Washington

Alpine Lakes (3)  
Boulder River (3)  
Clearwater  
Colonel Bob  
Glacier Peak (4)  
Glacier View  
Goat Rocks  
Henry M. Jackson (3)  
Indian Heaven  
Lake Chelan-Sawtooth  
Mount Adams  
Mount Baker (2)  
Mount Skokomish  
Noisy Diobsud (2)  
Norse Peak  
Pasayten  
Salmo-Priest (2)  
Tatoosh  
The Brothers  
Trapper Creek  
William O. Douglas  
Wonder Mountain

Region Eight - Southern Region (61)

Alabama

Cheaha  
Sipsey

Arkansas

Black Fork Mountain  
Caney Creek  
Dry Creek  
East Fork  
Flatside  
Hurricane Creek  
Leatherwood  
Poteau Mountain  
Richland Creek  
Upper Buffalo

Florida

Alexander Springs (2)  
Big Gum Swamp  
Billies Bay (2)  
Juniper Prairie  
Little Lake George

Georgia

Brasstown (2)  
Cohutta (2)  
Raven Cliffs (3)  
Rich Mountain (2)  
Southern Nantahala (2)  
Tray Mountain (3)

Louisiana

Kisatchie Hills

Mississippi

Black Creek  
Leaf

North Carolina

Catfish Lake South  
Joyce-Kilmer Slickrock (2)  
Linville Gorge  
Middle Prong  
Pocosin  
Pond Pine  
Sheep Ridge  
Shining Rock  
Southern Nantahala

Oklahoma

Black Fork Mountain  
Upper Kiamichi

South Carolina

Hell Hole Bay  
Little Wambaw Swamp  
Wambaw Creek

Tennessee

Bald River Gorge  
Big Frog  
Big Laurel Branch  
Citico Creek  
Cohutta  
Gee Creek  
Little Frog Mountain  
Pond Mountain  
Sampson Mountain  
Inaka Mountain

Texas

Big Slough  
Indian Mounds  
Turkey Hill  
Upland Island

Virginia

Barbours Creek  
Beartown  
James River Face  
Kimberling Creek  
Lewis Fork  
Shawvers Run  
Thunder Ridge



**Region Nine - Eastern Region (27)**

Indiana

Charles C. Deam

Maine

Caribou-Speckled Mountain

Michigan

Big Island Lake (2)

Delirium

Horseshoe Bay

Mackinac

McCormick

Nordhouse Dunes (2)

Round Island

Sturgeon River Gorge

Sylvania

Minnesota

Boundary Waters Canoe Area

New Hampshire

Great Gulf

Pemiwegasset

Presidential Range-Dry River

Sandwich Range

Pennsylvania

Allogheny Islands (2)

Hickory Creek (2)

Vermont

Breadloaf

West Virginia

Cranberry

Dolly Sods

Laurel Fork North

Laurel Fork South

Otter Creek

Wisconsin

Blackjack Springs

Headwaters

Whisker Lake

**Region Ten - Alaska Region (9)**

Alaska

Endicott River

Misty Fiords

Petersburg Cr-Duncan Salt Ck.

South Baranof (2)

South Prince of Wales

Stikine-Leconte

Tebenkof Bay

Tracy Arm-Fords Terror

West Chichagof-Yakobi (3)

Question 18: Please elaborate on what you think could be done to facilitate enjoyment of your NWPS unit by persons with disabilities:

- #55 In our planning and development of access point etc., this segment of the population should be considered. It does not mean that everyone has to be planned for at each location, but the service should be provided. The other key factor then is to get the information out so individuals are aware and can utilize it.
- #124 We should strive to accommodate the needs of the disabled to the greatest extent possible without comprising the long term management objectives of wilderness preservation. We need to be pro-active rather than re-active like we presently are in this area. However, this raises the delicate question of how to uniformly verify the need (or entitlement) for exemptions while protecting the dignity of the applicant. (This problem isn't unique to wilderness since we have regulations in all facets of recreation that could potentially exclude participation by the disabled.) Specifically, how does one "prove" their disability is actual and/or related to the particular exemption requested. The term "disabled" is often applied in a very general manner, such as "disabled veteran." The term disabled veteran is all encompassing in that it includes a variety of injuries such as partial loss or impairment of sight or hearing, missing fingers or toes, etc. In developed recreation we have occasionally had visitors claiming to be exempt from a variety of regulations (and even payment of fees) simply because they were "disabled veterans." I can foresee this occurring in wilderness too as our regulation becomes more restrictive. For example, the injuries cited above would not require the use of wheeled devices in wilderness. How can I, as a manager, distinguish fairly between an obviously disabled person in a wheelchair and another claiming some form of unobservable disability? This may seem trivial, but I think we need sideboards to protect the rights of the truly disabled while minimizing abuse of the intent of the AWDA. This cannot be achieved until managers are provided with uniform region-wide or service-wide policies AND procedures for establishing and granting valid exemptions.
- #101 Provide wilderness info via TDD for the hearing-impaired, post maps at trailheads to help folks who can't physically handle maps, post location of nearest phone to trailhead for reporting medical emergencies.
- #91 Rate parts of each wilderness as to degree of difficulty for persons with disabilities. Make this information available to organizations/people that would like to travel in the wilderness. The rating would have to be worked up by people with disabilities to reflex the necessary limitations for each disability. Make it known that there are local groups that would help people with disabilities enjoy the wilderness.



- #70 (1) Provide better access routes; (2) identify areas designed for people with disabilities, use literature, maps or brochures; (3) identify guidelines that managers need to be using for persons with disabilities. At one time we did not know that wheelchairs were permitted in wilderness areas; (4) seek cost challenge dollars with user groups that may want to see better trails within wilderness areas. We really need to find out if there is a need to develop trails or if this is just hype.
- #59 For our unit, we could identify areas, trails, outfitter/guides and other opportunities that are accessible/available for people with disabilities. We could identify trails most used by people with disabilities and maintain those at a higher standard. As an agency, we need to come up with some policy for use of wilderness by people with disabilities. We should not compromise the Wilderness Act by allowing use of ATV's and other motorized equipment. There is another group of disabled using the wilderness. Many mental health centers are using wildernesses for ropes courses for their mentally ill, emotionally ill patients. If you are including these groups under handicapped, I would raise our estimate of the number of handicapped who are using the wilderness to 80.
- #56 Primarily direction. Standards and guidelines based on public participation would be welcome. Especially anything we might be able to do now which would provide better access for people who have disabilities. We really haven't done a good job of addressing the issue.
- #57 People confined to wheelchairs are currently allowed to travel in wilderness if they can. There are a lot of things we could do, however, to improve the opportunities for enjoyment. Overall, facilities at trailheads could be constructed to accommodate users for starters. Where there is an interest, special facilities such as ramps for getting on a horse, could be built. The agency could sponsor certain days to take disabled folks into wilderness, to lead trips. Information about opportunities could be made available to groups which can get the word out to disabled folks. There are a lot of opportunities to do much, much more outside wilderness, and still provide the same basic experience. Most people, disabled or not, don't really know any difference between designated wilderness and any other forested area away from the crowds. To compromise wilderness values for the sake of providing improved recreational experiences for disabled individuals would be a mistake. We need to educate all people that wilderness is much more than a recreation resource.
- #47 (1) The highest percentage of people with disabilities using this unit appear to have hearing impairments -- I don't know what can be done to facilitate their enjoyment. (2) Of 3 trails on the unit that have a fairly level slope, all have tread widths that can accommodate wheelchairs (2-4 feet). To better facilitate enjoyment, perhaps stream crossings could be provided. (3) Be sure that accurate information regarding recreation and wilderness opportunities are provided to all members of the public (inc. people with disabilities) -- we are currently taking measures to ensure that we provide better info to the public. (4) Consult with association(s) of people with disabilities during the wilderness planning process.
- #149 Funds need to be made available for the sole purpose of planning, feasibility and possibility construction ( or improvement) of



facilities. Priorities need to be assigned. If more dollars come to the District for Wilderness and it is not earmarked for accessibility then it will most likely be used for Wilderness restoration, Limits of Acceptable Change, Administration, Operation and Maintenance. It takes a certain skill to be able to produce a professional information guide for dissemination of information.

- #98 I am strongly against increasing horse usage in wilderness areas since horses create great environmental impacts (this is one person's personal opinion - not my whole Forests' - please note). Otherwise, I would suggest approaching handicap organizations and letting them know what opportunities are available. Some handicap groups (hearing impaired, etc) would not necessarily have to use horses. In general, we do not "advertise" our wilderness to ANYONE - it already has tremendous pressure in a few areas, is close to Desolation Wilderness and Lake Tahoe, and the popularity of this entire area is increasing. Handicapped people as well as able-bodied can have adverse impacts on the resources. I would like to see a brochure available to handicapped people/groups if they approach us. They have as much right as anyone to use the wilderness as long as they comply with the same rules as the general public. However, I personally would like to not advertise wilderness . . . only for reasons of preserving the integrity of the wilderness resource.
- #129 Encourage our permittees, outfitter/guides to continue programs for the disabled, this would include user groups such as the backcountry horsemen. Educate this portion of the public of the objectives of wilderness and work with these persons in understanding wants and desires they have and how to accomplish their needs while protecting these pristine areas for the enjoyment of all; disabled or not. I believe an acceptable solution to the access problem is available within our current management policies if all work together and cooperate to reach the solution. We do allow aircraft into some wilderness areas on limited basis, but this does not mean that aircraft are appropriate in every wilderness nor everywhere in the wilderness. Special consideration and/or facilities should be our last option.
- #122 Lots could be done! We could advertise to specific groups with disabilities by telling them what is available, and let them also know the risks involved. We do not want to compromise the quality of the wilderness experience by making everything flat and paved, as that would lessen the challenge and feeling of fulfillment achieved by someone surmounting the difficulty of wilderness travel. We could also organize trips as an agency that catered to people with specific disabilities and provide the assistance needed. This would benefit both the people on the trip and the agency itself, and promote acceptance of diverse backgrounds by Forest Service employees. Signage could be done in recreational areas outside of the wilderness that still provide the feeling of wilderness in a less restrictive management allocation.
- #119 (1) Identification of difficulty levels for accessibility. (2) Better information/brochures available, especially for district receptionists. (3) Training to provide understanding/sensitivity so

- that all employees are aware of how accessibility fits in with resource management. This should include management types like District Rangers and field going types like trail maintenance folks and wilderness rangers. (4) Review existing standards and incorporate accessibility in planning of facility design, trail maintenance, and wilderness planning and administration. (5) We already include young people in our wilderness education emphasis. Target other groups of people (i.e. older folks) for wilderness education.
- #116 I'm not certain we should do anything. Alpine Lakes is very heavily used. We are trying to get people to use other areas. If people specifically inquire, we offer advice and are helpful. It's possible we could improve some trails in the transition zone to accommodate wheelchairs...we are generally so overwhelmed that we have not taken on this added issue.
- #105 I asked for input from a visually impaired Sierra Club leader. She feels that organizations such as the Sierra Club need to sensitize their leaders to the fact that they may have persons with disabilities on their trips. She says that more people will be joining trips into the backcountry as more people are exposed to such activities. Along those lines, we could facilitate enjoyment of the wilderness by such groups by improving our contacts with groups and agencies which serve people with disabilities. Wilderness managers might develop presentations and activities to introduce wilderness to these groups. For example, the USFS could work with the Sierra Club Inner City Outings Group (even on the regional or national level) to develop wilderness information and activities to be dispersed through the ICO group.
- #97 There are several ideas that come to mind. I must admit that these thoughts are spurred by the questionnaire. I am not aware of a special emphasis to provide for the physically challenged in wilderness. I receive very few requests for special considerations for access into the wilderness from this group. I can see a need to have this kind of information available for the visitor that addresses this issue exists. It would appear to be appropriate to identify some trail segments that could be reconstructed for wheelchair access. Outfitter guides could be encouraged to explore the potential for transporting the physically challenged with stock or providing food drops within the wilderness. Your questionnaire provoked some thought. I can see a need to conduct an inventory of what would be available at the present time for various handicap visitors and what adaptations are needed to improve access for future visitors. We are currently working on developing the Dick Smith Implementation Plan and will add discussion pertaining to access and the Physically challenged.
- #87 The Sawtooth Wilderness is composed of extremely mountainous terrain. As mentioned, almost 90% of the trails are open to stock use. However, of the 21 access points to the Sawtooth Wilderness, only three have limited potential for barrier-free access. The Stanley Lake and Queens River trails are located in valley bottoms which could provide a minimum of 36" wheelchair width and grades less than 8.33%, but only for 1-1.5 miles from the trailhead. An old roadbed near Grandjean could be utilized for approximately 6 miles into the Wilderness, however 3 new river crossings



would be required. Generally, a 24" trail tread width (FSH 2309.18) has been used in this steep country to minimize soil disturbance and help protect the aesthetic quality of the area. Some of our new trailhead designs will utilize a barrier-free unloading ramp developed in partnership with the Idaho Disabilities Coalition.

- #88 Identify zones of the wilderness or specific trails, destinations, etc., that are suitable for individual use (persons hiring guides with specialized equipment are able to go just about anywhere) to encourage use by disabled people who are seeking challenge and solitude. The problem is that those trails that are wide and flat and negotiable by wheelchair are the heavy-use ones close to the trailheads.

Conduct a study of people with disabilities to find out what they want. We've tried to put together a citizen advisory group here, but we're such a small community with visitors primarily from out the area, that it's been difficult to find people with disabilities, let alone those who want to serve on a group. So, if we had the benefit of information about what people want in similar (but larger) areas, it would help us identify needs.

Encourage the manufacturers of wheelchairs to start making outdoor models. A lot of our trails would be usable to a lower geared, mountain bike-chair.

Get some info out on opportunities for the disabled -- in or out of wilderness, as part of ROGs, brochures, etc. There are some trails outside of wilderness that offer more solitude and are located on suitable terrain. We have a number of wheelchair-bound elk hunters in this area who appreciate being able to use our closed roads and non-wilderness trails with wheelchairs, 4-wheel OHVs, etc.

- #83 Provide facilities at the trailheads so they can at least view the wilderness at that location. Provide facilities at vistas. Provide information and videos on the wilderness. Handicapped access toilets, information to persons with disabilities which identify the type of access to the area, the topography of the area and what they can expect. This information is available if a person calls and asks, but is not generally available in handouts or other mass media forms. Continue working with outfitters who host persons with disabilities.

- #67 We do not presently have any written information on opportunities for individuals with disabilities to use wilderness. We could develop that type of information. Partnerships could be developed between outfitter/guides and organizations that work with individuals with disabilities so that individuals could be transported through portions of the wilderness on horseback. If we better understood limitations of individuals with disabilities, we might be able to provide better information if anyone asks. Training might be appropriate.

- #60 I would like to point out the pitfalls of lumping the wide variety of mobility, visually, psychologically, etc. impairments into a single generality. This question needs to be specific to disability. Therefore, for what it's worth, here is my answer, in general terms. I feel that we could co-sponsor disability awareness/protocol training for our commercial outfitter/guides (rafting) and to our river rangers and



reception/information staff at the district. I know of several organizations which provide outfitter/guide/wilderness travel opportunities to folks with some type of disability or another I do not feel that we should attempt to develop trails or allow airplane tours, etc. in order to cater to any specific type of disability, there would be no end to specific requests if this was initiated. While we should not preclude use by the public to any area without exceptional cause, neither should we guarantee access to every area within the public domain to every individual. We are dealing with a sensitive, heartfelt issue here but should not lose sight of the task at hand . . . wilderness preservation.

#117 Non-disabled friends need to help their disabled pals.

#61 Devote staff and wilderness ranger time/funds in cooperation with local/state groups and organizations to conduct special awareness/training events designed to promote use of wilderness. Provide written information in the obvious places, such as wilderness map narrative. Why not develop a brochure designed to aid the various disabled users in accessing and using the wilderness? Develop special access and upgraded trails at one or more wilderness portals. The Sandia Mountain Wilderness has at least two locations where topography and existing access are suitable. Realignment and construction of a wider, less steep trail would be required at such locations. This year we participated in a special work/ed program with city of Albu. We provided supervision for a mentally/physically disabled person to work as a part of our Wilderness trail maintenance crew. This provided a great opportunity for our folks to gain insights re: barriers, limitations, misconceptions, etc.

#77 Have Wilderness Rangers go out to schools and groups to talk about wilderness opportunities (we currently have no Wilderness Rangers). Have written material to send to schools/groups. Actively recruit disabled persons to work as volunteers; they could explore our wilderness areas, do write-ups for other disabled folks, could be ambassadors for our wilderness areas, and could tell us what works for them and what doesn't so that we could possibly create some trails, vistas, and interpretive information that would be useful for people with disabilities. We would do all the same things that we would be doing for the "general public" if we were able to do our jobs correctly.

#137 I think it is being enjoyed by persons with disabilities, both directly and indirectly, and will and should continue at present levels. I am not a proponent of adjusting standards in Wilderness. There are areas outside wilderness that could be developed to meet the same need as those disabled individuals are looking for. Facilities could be built to accommodate a range of disabled use in these areas. As for use in Wilderness, if a person is willing to take a wheelchair up a primitive trail, he/she has my admiration, and more power to them. But not my sympathy, I would treat them as any other wilderness visitor, and I think they would be grateful for the interaction. The last thing a disabled person wants is to be treated differently from everyone else.

#181 Manage Wilderness for the true intent of the Act. Where the opportunities exist to accommodate people with disabilities then we

should make the effort to do so but not at the expense of Wilderness values.

#75 Working with a local physically challenged (which is what he likes to be referred to) person who expressed an interest in wilderness use, I found that access to wilderness trails with wheelchairs in mountainous areas can be very difficult. I took this individual out and we attempted to travel the easiest trails I had available and were not able to make any distance at all. After our attempt, we talked at great length about wilderness access for physically challenged people and he noted that almost any type of semi-primitive experience would greatly improve the opportunities that are readily available presently. A trail outside wilderness that offers a primitive experience such as a artificially hardened tread, but not paved, can serve the user almost as well as a trail inside the boundary. I still believe that we as an agency need to look at opportunities for physically challenged trails inside wilderness, but let's not overlook the opportunity to provide a primitive experience outside the boundary that will serve the use almost a swell. It is so encouraging to see an interest in this special user group as they, as well as all americans are entitled to use and enjoy the unique resource of wilderness.

#144 As mentioned earlier, we have several barrier-free trails proposed, and as soon as they are funded, they should begin to be implemented. In the steeper portions of the wilderness, barrier-free access would be expensive and difficult to build, and would remain difficult to access, though not impossible. These areas are also difficult access for people who do not have specific disabilities. There are currently no barriers to those people with disabilities of other types. Anyone is welcome to enjoy our wilderness resources as long as they observe the regulations that have been put in place to protect the wilderness resource. We expect ALL of our wilderness users to accept responsibility for their own safety and well-being. The element of risk and challenge is a valuable part of the wilderness experience, as is self-reliance and accepting the responsibility for one's own actions. We need and want to add the disabled users to our educational outreach efforts. We also need to know how many disabled users are interested in using the wilderness and other areas on our district. Until we get some feedback indicating interest, we don't know where to concentrate our efforts and funding.

#155 I believe special use permits should be granted to individuals with disabilities such as those stricken to wheelchairs. It has been brought to my attention that disabled persons wishing to hunt in the state of Arkansas can obtain a special permit allowing them to actually shoot game while seated in their vehicle. My point is, if wilderness exemplifies freedom then individuals destined to spend the rest of their life in a wheelchair should not be denied the right to roll a "wheeled chair" through their wilderness areas. Well, enough of the soapbox routine. I would just like to say that special use permits should be given more thought and consideration.

#185 On units that allow horseback use (on some units this is restricted to trails), provide horse riding facilities outside wilderness boundaries that allow for ease of use by persons with disabilities. Enjoyment of



wilderness resources does not have to be limited to visitation. Many people derive benefits from wilderness though they never visit them. This may be a way ALL of our publics can enjoy wilderness (ie. Bequest, Preservation Values. . . ). Our real challenge is to provide opportunities for disabled persons without compromising the intent of the Wilderness Act, part of which was to provide opportunities for physical and mental challenge. Also, some of the provisions of the Wilderness Act precludes the building of facilities that would make Wilderness more accessible to some people with disabilities.

- #3 Provide info related to the wilderness resource and visitor experiences available. As we learn more about ecosystems, we learn how fragile and finite wilderness is. Facilitation of enjoyment, beyond providing information, within the wilderness is contentious and probably not in the interest of health of the resource.
- #16 (1) Market the various Outfitter/Guide services available (2) Advertise the Trail Degree of Difficulty (3) Advertise the recreation Opportunities available in the Wilderness.  
Items 2 and 3 are already being done. I feel that marketing O/G Services would increase use of our wilderness, but I also feel that it is the responsibility of the O/G's to market themselves and the services they provide for people with disabilities. It should be our role to encourage this marketing by pointing out that it is in the O/G's own best financial interest to do so. I also feel that we should do more to improve access to wilderness-like areas, such as primitive and isolated areas not included in designated wilderness areas, and to areas which lie immediately adjacent to wilderness boundaries. There are many places where this could be done, and few where it IS being done. Perhaps a new designation for such areas would be appropriate, such as accessible primitive areas, where access would be strictly controlled to permit mechanical transport devices for disabled persons, but deny access to any other types of mechanical devices.
- #25 I believe the following special provisions could be implemented either formally or informally for the physically and developmentally challenged: (1) Allow wheelchairs for all those who require them. (2) Allow animal-drawn carts for challenged individuals. (3) Design and upgrade trails and bridges for 1 and 2, above. (4) Provide for outfitter-guided trips for the challenged through special use permits. (5) Allow those minor specialized facilities which would facilitate access to the Wilderness, but which would not degrade the resource nor the experience.
- #35 We have been working with disabled people (in wheelchairs) to develop an accessible trail into the Indian Peaks Wilderness. The comments we get suggest that they want primitive trails. Not ones that are overly developed. They felt that no one who is disabled should be on Wilderness Trails by themselves, but should be with other people who could help them negotiate tough areas. Chuck Frayer of R-6 was one of the disabled persons we had worked with.
- #41 Because the nature of wilderness is such that providing improvements for travel (ie. trails that are easily passable by a wheelchair or are cleared for easy travel by blind hikers) goes against the concept of what a wilderness should be. I don't feel that improvements in travel routes are



appropriate. We could, however, provide ramps and other structures at trailheads for physically challenged hikers and horsemen. We could also provide informational brochures and signs printed in Braille.

- #11 Recognize every individual has differences and limitations and approach the accessibility question considering what is appropriate for all users. Recognize differences in appropriate accessibility between man created structures and wildlands. It is simply inappropriate to try and make wildlands equally accessible to all people. Some special areas and sites can and should be made easily accessible, including wheelchairs, many sites cannot be made that accessible without significant environmental impact. A disability such as epilepsy must have more to do with traveling with companions and proper medication than width of trail. This whole thing is a complex issue that this questionnaire does not adequately address.
- #7 I am opposed to altering the resource in any manner that would render it "less wild" in order to facilitate use. However, outfitters could be encouraged to develop a market for catering to the disabled visitor. Non-motorized wheelchairs are, and should be allowed. But we should not degrade the resource to accommodate use. Wilderness must be met on its terms, and all people who use it, physically challenged or otherwise, need to recognize this rule of use. People with physical disabilities have had to deal with wilderness throughout time. It once was the ultimate test of survival. Now it can be the ultimate recreational challenge. But those unable to meet that challenge must then go elsewhere, outside of wilderness, where the environment can meet, or be altered to meet their abilities.
- #112 If a group similar to Wilderness Inquiry was available in this area, it would be possible to set up trips by horse/mule into our wilderness areas. We must emphasize the need for gentle, well-trained stock, with extra personnel experienced in working with the handicapped. Please contact Bob Stone, Beth Plymale, or Sandy Lewotsky at 805-925-9538.
- #118 To install barrier-free facilities at trailheads or access points; toilets, horse ramps, boat ramps.
- #132 Design short loop trails off existing trails that are barrier-free and within 1/2 mile of trailhead/parking area.
- #113 Persons with disabilities should be encouraged to use wilderness areas through marketing and information provided by the forest service and it's permitted outfitter guides. Many disabled persons could access wilderness on horseback if they understood the relative ease of this kind of transportation. Commercial outfitter guides could conduct special trips geared for these individuals. The region should eliminate its strict stance on the non-use of mechanized equipment in instances where disabled persons need this form of assistance. Permission to use wheeled equipment should not have to be granted on an individual request basis by the region when this just complicates the process and discourages the disabled individual from attempting this form of dispersed recreation.

- #12 Ensuring that take in and take out locations are reasonably accessible to folks with disabilities.
- #13 Keep the challenge there! Recognize that take in and take out locations are reasonably accessible to folks with disabilities. Encourage service partners to fill niche market for handicapped accessible trips. Retain elements of challenge!
- #139 I think identifying trails which currently have the potential to provide opportunities for people with physical limitations would be a good start. I suspect that many of us Wilderness managers do not have a good idea of what some of these people are capable of doing (or not doing) as far as getting up some of our trails. Maybe we managers need training on what constitutes an impassable trail for various disabilities - I suspect we underestimate abilities as often as we overestimate. We also need clear and specific direction as to what we can and cannot do to provide access to people with disabilities. In other words, what can we legitimately do to accommodate these folks and still provide for the preservation of the Wilderness character.
- #71 One way that we could help folks with disabilities enjoy our wilderness areas, is to provide them with information about areas that are accessible to them now. This information could give them ratings of difficulty and warnings of hazards in the area. The information could also include names and numbers of groups that specialize in leading these types of trips. Also, as always, a map of loop trails or trips could be helpful.
- #133 We have only two trailheads which access our 22,000 acre wilderness. These trailheads could be made/designed more "barrier-free" than they currently are and better displays could be set up for people with disabilities to enjoy. The trailheads are on the very edge of the wilderness boundary and their immediate setting is very primitive. It would be a neat experience just to hang-out at the trailheads and mess around there if they were made a little bit more barrier-free. And of course there is nothing to prohibit disabled people from entering into the wilderness itself except for possibly using an electrical/motorized wheelchair which I think are currently illegal to use in wilderness.
- #134 Better trail maintenance would allow passage for walkers, visually impaired, and those who lack coordination. Also, organized trips with guides, family, friends, could be used to encourage use by local groups of differently abled people.
- #138 Would like to see guidelines which define "disabled" for wilderness use. Who can use what? Does a back problem mean a person can use a wheeled cart? A person with a bad leg who has to use a wheelchair for a month, can this person use one in the wilderness? Would also like to see more support from the Region and forest level.
- #141 In select areas, trails could be constructed to facilitate use by persons with disabilities. Consider the disabled in the construction of all facilities planned and implemented.



- #156 As I said before, information and interpretation has been a weak area in our recreation management. Without large increases in funding during the time of budget deficits (on a Federal Level) we have fallen woefully short in providing interpretive services to all persons regardless of ability. We are finally seeing an interest in providing funding to correct this. We have a long way to go. This year we plan to have volunteer interpreters for our developed sites . . . with establishment of this program initially. In the future, with continued funding, we hope to expand this program to include interpretation that will include methods to reach persons with limited abilities.
- #161 Leatherwood Wilderness is a rugged mountainous area with no developed trails. It does contain some old roads but most of these are steep, narrow and rough. A committee was established consisting of private citizens to assist us in writing an implementation document for this area and it was decided that no trails were to be built in the wilderness at this time. Due to these features, persons with disabilities would find it difficult to use much of the area. To make this area more accessible to persons with disabilities, trails would have to be developed that would be compatible with this type of use.
- #166 Publicize what is available for all to enjoy via brochures and other appropriate literature. If disabled have used the Wilderness successfully, this could be elaborated upon in the brochure. When Wilderness Rangers encounter disabled people in the Wilderness, information should be obtained as to type of use, the good as well as the bad experiences that person has had, the type of disability, etc. and use this information to help educate other potential users. Also, use it to determine if slight modifications might help increase use by disabled.
- #172 Through scoping and public involvement associated with limits of acceptable change planning . . . determine demand and acceptable modification to existing travel facilities where appropriate.
- #173 Special trails, some overlooks, some special brochures for persons with disabilities, but nothing that would embarrass them, guided tours.
- #175 Interpretive signs and brochures for the visually impaired, interpretive signs at road overlooks into the wilderness areas for wheelchair users, brochures explaining wilderness philosophy and access guidelines. Trail access must be addressed in the management plans as they are developed.
- #176 Of those areas which are on the Ouachita, there are two with trails that could be used by persons with disabilities. These areas could be identified as NWPS areas with trails which facilitate use by persons with disabilities. This would not mean that they were designed for use by persons with disabilities, but that they do offer the opportunity, in most cases with help from their friends, to have a challenging experience. The other areas offer even greater challenges since some do not have trails or have trails of very primitive



- nature. It should be made clear that these people are not prohibited from using the areas with non-motorized wheelchairs. In any wilderness education package, we need to include these special populations and educate our non-disabled users about those with disabilities.
- #186 Improve access at informal trailheads and develop a trail system which would be handicapped accessible.
- #72 Adopt trail standards that allow for the passage of wheelchairs on a portion of the wilderness area. Have a wheelchair accessible camping area for white water boaters.
- #74 It is very difficult to provide trail opportunities for wheelchairs as they need such a smooth surface to function safely. We have been very involved with providing disabled people a variety of recreational opportunities such as handicap fishing docks, fishing trails, bathrooms, interpretive trails, but all outside wilderness. I have two excellent contacts that I have worked with that consulted us in relation to the above projects. We did look into wilderness opportunities but could not see our way clear for anything. I think possibly to designate one trail that is easily accessed from the popular entry points and maintain that trail for handicap use would be something that might work. There are a number of surfacing solutions that when mixed with dirt provide for a good solid surface without paving the tread.
- #78 Encourage commercial outfitters to seek and serve disabled populations. Several outfitter/guides currently provide float trips and trail rides/camps. Include specialized info for disabled on existing wilderness map and ROG. Consider making exceptions to exclusion of mechanized means of transport for the disabled on a case-by-case basis, but do not compromise trail standards to do so. The proposed use must fit the proposed area. The Mazatzal Wilderness includes the segment of the Verde River designated as Wilderness. There is vehicle access to a decent put-in, so it wouldn't be difficult to get a disabled person on the water. Several days are required to float out of the wilderness segment to a take-out point with vehicle access. If a person could get around a campsite, a wilderness trip would be possible. Those capable of horseback riding could also manage a trip. I viewed the Wilderness Inquiry segment on Sunday morning a few weeks ago and wondered about this entire topic. I'm not aware of wilderness areas that make exceptions for wheelchairs, but would like to know if there are some and how it is rationalized. The Phoenix area has a large "snowbird" or retired population, so it may also have a higher proportion of people with disabilities associated with age.
- #142 We need to provide very clear information on the existing conditions of each area so people with disabilities will know what to expect so they can determine if the area is suitable for them. To upgrade or improve the trails to allow for barrier-free access would, in most cases, degrade the values of the wilderness area.
- #143 Providing organized trips that cater to disabled groups. Being more liberal about the use of wheelchairs or other appliances needed by the disabled. Use a permit system for approval. Having a disabled

parking permit issued by the state of residence serve as proof of disability.

- #148 In some areas, existing trail grades, terrain, tread material, and distance to attractions would permit access into the wilderness by persons with mobility impairments. These trails with only minor tread work (widening in some areas), could be made accessible to those capable of "Challenge Level 2" (or whatever it is to be called). This would probably equate to an "Easy Difficulty" trail for the able-bodied. Areas that have trails that meet all these criteria will probably be rare in the NWPS (such potential trails in our area were constructed prior to wilderness designation). Trails with a degree of accessibility within wilderness would normally only be considered in areas (like ours) which have no or very limited primitive or semiprimitive settings outside of designated wilderness. To implement this, some changes in National/Regional wilderness trail standards would be needed to retain some wider, easier trails in transition or portal areas that would be accessible.
- #158 Wilderness areas should have different access standards. Some trails at the beginning of the wilderness should be more accessible and use restricted to the physically challenged.
- #188 I think more education for the managers, planners and the rangers is necessary so we can understand the special needs of this group of users.
- #196 We have seen examples of and hope to develop for our own use an information brochure identifying wilderness recreation opportunities for people with disabilities. We are considering and could construct accessible fishing piers just outside of the wilderness boundary (on lakes that are partially inside of and outside of the wilderness). We discussed and could maintain some trails with a wider tread width and relatively flat and even surfaces for wheelchair access. We could identify campsites with the easiest accessibility and modify them if needed to provide wider trail widths for access to latrines, canoe landings, or trails. The picnic tables at the wilderness campsites are scheduled to be removed. At identified campsites we could provide a rustic structure that can be accessed and used for cookstoves or other purposes. We considered and discussed providing trailhead signs in Braille depending upon the need.
- #199 Provide wheelchair accessible entry points to wilderness. Provide some trails that do not hinder wheelchair mobility, at least to some point of interest or focus point. Provide a forest-wide brochure on barrier-free facilities as well as our policy on wheelchairs in wilderness.
- #202 Inform folks with disabilities that in general, there are no restrictions other than no motorized use, and that they are welcome to visit.
- #203 Since the remoteness of areas in Alaska is a problem to all people, the Forest Service could encourage commercial outfitter/guides and



transporters who provide access to and within the Wilderness to cater more to persons with disabilities.

- #207 Access to the wilderness areas maintained by the larger District are extremely limited, even for non-disabled people. Disabled persons can view one of the areas from cruise ships and two of the three areas from pleasure boats. They can also go on flight seeing tours to all three areas (flying in wilderness is perfectly acceptable in Alaska). The best thing we could do is publish a region-wide pamphlet detailing how a person with a disability can enjoy the wilderness. This document could detail how to access the different areas in the Juneau Ranger District and all of southeast Alaska.
- #206 I believe those with disabilities could enjoy our wilderness if they knew about it and were able to travel by boat or floatplane. Not many people know about our wilderness and if they do, are unable to afford accessing it by boat or floatplane. So the two things that could facilitate enjoyment would be to publicize the wilderness, and provide affordable access to it.
- #205 We are beginning a program to provide facilities which are handicap accessible. Outfitter guide programs which facilitate those with disabilities the opportunity to visit Misty Fiords.
- #8 Provide the same level of public information, trail conditions, available outfitters, etc., etc., as we do to all publics!
- #14 Close coordination and cooperation with the outfitting industry to provide a number of varied services to a diverse group of persons with disabilities. Contact and consideration of input from organizations representing the disabled as well as individuals in the private sector who are disabled. Need to get a realistic estimation of what the demand is from the disabled.
- #26 Interpretive signing at trailheads, hardening and widening of trails, identification of visible features, commercial guides equipped to handle certain disabilities, allow disabled to utilize camps used by Forest Service personnel, and ask disabled about their needs and preferences.
- #37 Disabled persons could be encouraged to challenge the physical barriers that exist in wilderness. Outfitters could be encouraged to provide this service. I think this might be appropriate since the barriers that exist are natural and not the result of construction by non-disabled people as exists in many buildings and public areas.
- #190 Providing info concerning accessibility of wilderness and use of other similar special areas (which are not designated wilderness). Putting folks in touch with people/organizations who can help facilitate a wilderness experience if help is needed/wanted. We definitely should not allow exceptions (use of motorized equipment) or make special accommodations (ie. building facilities).
- #200 In our case, the greatest potential is trail standards in selected locations. Also, we have talked about trail descriptions using



universal criteria that would allow a person with disabilities - or anyone for that matter - to judge for him or herself if they should attempt a particular trail or section of trail. We have installed several TDD when on the Forest for all forest information with Wilderness information being a part of that.

- #2 More interpretive messages would be helpful to all users. Outfitters and guides might be encouraged to develop this special market with trips exclusively for disabled people. The Forest Service could/should work with interested parties and organizations to facilitate organized group use of our wilderness areas by those who are professional care givers, such as Special Ed teachers, or groups such as Special Olympics. With Wilderness budgets greatly improved, a portion of these funds should be allocated for projects which emphasize disabled people. As a start, I would think more extensive contacts with local disabled persons/organizations necessary to determine what the actual level of interest in wilderness experience is among their constituents.
- #22 Encourage more use of outfitter guides in working with the disabled in the wilderness. Get more information out to the field on what the disabled really need for access (see draft design guide for accessible outdoor recreation). Then get out the information on how compatible with the wilderness resource this can be. Maybe then we can improve the availability of parts of our wilderness areas to the disabled when access routes are reconstructed.
- #38 Make maps, signs, bulletin boards, etc., accessible by all. Use either raised or routed signs so that they can be felt by visually impaired people etc. Change the wording on the wilderness legislation to allow for wheelchairs so that if people want to go into the wilderness in a wheelchair they are not violating a law.
- #209 Let the public know the wilderness areas exist and that people with disabilities can enjoy them in a variety of ways. Kayaking, cruising, beach lounging, nature observation, solitude, high adventure. Our wilderness areas and associated attributes are especially accessible to disabled people because access is 95% motorized - floatplanes and boats. A person can easily be put ashore from these modes of transportation and participate in activities (above) with assistance. Our wilderness areas are NOT popular for hiking and such activities on account of terrain and weather. General wilderness users gain access to areas as above and travel through wilderness via boat or airplane. We need to publicize opportunities in our wilderness.
- #150 We have a few old roadbeds within the wilderness boundary. Rather than demaintaining them to hiking/packstock standard, they could be made to disabled standards.
- #121 We could explore the possibility of a loop trail that would be more accessible than our existing trail system. Our two wilderness units start at 7500 feet and climb almost immediately to 13,000 ft. It's a challenge without physical disabilities. Is there a percent slope that should not be exceeded for physical disabilities? Another idea

is to promote wilderness access on horseback. Our outfitter guides might be willing to take groups into Latir or Wheeler Peak Wilderness.

- #117 Facilities for disabled persons could be constructed, for horses especially. Trails also need to be improved in many areas.
- #68 SALT RIVER CANYON WILDERNESS: Continue to improve river access points particularly at put-ins and take-outs. This would help disabled river users to get in and out of their water craft. We have made great progress to assist the general public, more improvements would help both able-bodied and disabled river users. SALOME WILDERNESS: Short hardened trails/paths could be constructed to allow disabled visitors to access the canyon rim for views and photography. MAZATZAL WILDERNESS: Existing trail into Deer Creek could be improved to allow disabled visitors to enjoy this desert riparian environment. FOUR PEAKS WILDERNESS: Two trails leading from a major trailhead have reasonable grades. These could be further improved. SUPERSTITION WILDERNESS: The area along Campaign Creek contains an outstanding grove of cottonwoods and sycamore trees. Fairly easy grades and close proximity to trailhead make this a potential destination for disabled visitors.
- #111 The wilderness is mostly composed of mountainous steep terrain with a narrow trail system. My recommendation would be to improve the facilities at the trailhead and improve a portion of the existing trail so that people with disabilities could enjoy a day trip to a quiet, picturesque, and inspiring vantage point.
- #46 Permittees holding commercial rafting permits could organize special rafting float trips designed to accommodate persons or parties with disabilities. This may require them to invest in some specialized equipment and devise some special procedures to insure safety and comfort of such a clientele. Resulting fee charged them may be somewhat higher to offset the higher costs.
- #45 (1) Major trail reconstruction (2) Handicapped facility construction of toilets, trails, water, etc., at trailheads (3) Publicity that this wilderness exists (4) Trail construction of a short "loop" with interpretive program for visually and hearing impaired that is wheelchair accessible.
- #48 In select trailheads, build facilities to aid persons with disabilities. . build short loop trails into the NWPS units, thus enabling the wheelchair, cane and crutch folks to experience the wilderness end.
- #51 For disabled folks who can travel within the Gila Wilderness, personal interpretation with wilderness rangers would be beneficial.
- #58 Perhaps a safety pamphlet tailored to meet the needs of special populations would be of assistance: visual or hearing impaired, mentally retarded, epileptics, etc. Our unit is difficult to enter and becomes remote quickly. There are substantial hazards in wilderness travel here and they would be exacerbated for those with disabilities. However, access is possible for those without severe motor difficulties.



- #86 If we had increased demand we could develop some disability horse facilities at our trailheads. We could develop a partnership with an outfitter guide service to provide opportunities for people with disabilities. We could educate people with disabilities about other opportunities we have on the forest for the recreation experiences they are looking for.
- #90 (1) Development of interpretive areas that overlook wilderness and have trails and information for disabled persons. (2) Personal contact with disabled groups on ways to enjoy wilderness and experience challenge and self-reliance. (3) Encouraging and highlighting organized groups that offer services to disabled persons to use wilderness on its own terms and accept the challenge and to experience the rewards that come with overcoming the challenges.
- #96 Reach out to organized groups that represent the disabled to inform them of opportunities (or lack thereof). Be receptive to ideas that will improve access and safety for the disabled (while maintaining the intent of the Wilderness Act to keep man's imprint on wilderness to a minimum) -- there are some access designs that may be compatible with wilderness. Wheelchair access to the Agua Tibia Wilderness is permitted, but in reality it is not practical with the current trail system.
- #100 Some very descriptive write ups of some of the trails so they would know what to expect. Some videos of some of the wilderness so they could enjoy it without necessarily going into it.
- #102 Because of rocky and sometimes steep terrain, wheelchair access would be difficult. We are trying to accommodate persons with disabilities by making horse access a viable possibility. We are constructing a new trailhead that will be accessible for those with disabilities that wish to use the wilderness via horseback. We hope to work with members of the Telephone Pioneers who do other projects on our district that provide universal access. Some of those members are horsemen involved with programs for the disabled.
- #109 A limited portion of the Ansel Adams Wilderness adjacent to developed campgrounds in the Red's Meadow/Devil's Postpile National Monument is suitable for wheelchair access if needed improvements could be made to trail surfaces to allow wheelchair access. A portion of the Pacific Crest Trail within this wilderness is also suitable, with modifications, for wheelchair access. Stock use could conflict with wheelchair access and necessary improvements to trail surface if developed.
- #125 Provide horse loading facilities to accommodate various disabilities. Provide safety information on what to look for when camping. For instance, those who have hearing disabilities should be aware of what dangerous dead trees look like . . so they can try not to set up camp near them. When talking to and organizing with wilderness groups, horse clubs and/or hiking clubs, voice the potentials of involving people with disabilities and perhaps have their program advertise the opportunities.

- #123 At this time, our unit offers limited opportunities to the general public as well as to persons with disabilities. We are in an upward movement toward providing a more enjoyable recreational experience in our wilderness for all users. Our trailheads will offer barrier-free tables and outhouses. Once these projects are completed, I think it would be appropriate to offer informational hand-outs regarding barrier-free opportunities.
- #127 Create a brochure listing trails easily accessed and points of interest to visit. Spend time with wilderness guards and in certain areas where resources and management plans allow, reconstruct accesses to allow easy access for persons with disabilities along edges.
- #130 Attempts by district units to proactively reach out to disabled visitors to better learn of their needs/desires. This communication could lead to some partnerships that could result in better use of Wilderness areas with only slight modifications consistent with Wilderness philosophies.
- #44 Handicap access around our small wilderness lake, also fishing access. Wider trails with gradual slopes.
- #66 Provide vistas and camping areas immediately adjacent to wilderness that offer primitive recreational opportunities.
- #106 (1) Design handicapped trails into wilderness areas. (2) Handicapped parking areas. (3) Handicapped self-guided tours. (4) Develop an opportunity guide for each wilderness area.
- #95 Education to ensure they feel welcome. Guidelines for special permit when requested. Maintaining lower sections for disability use.
- #73 Develop a local outfitter guide that can accommodate the needs of the people with disabilities.
- #145 Increased use of areas by outfitter-guides catering to this specific population. At present, we have no acknowledged or identified problems with this type of use.
- #152 Provide informational material on trails suitable for their use.
- #162 Continue present management. However, keep areas a challenge for all users.
- #164 Inform them as to what wilderness is and let them make their own decisions concerning visitation.
- #165 Designation of horse trails/use.
- #167 The Florida Wilderness Act of 1983 which designated Alexander Springs Wilderness Area made a specific exception to the use of motorized equipment. The use of motorboats on Alexander Springs Creek (which flows through the middle of the area) is not prohibited. This



- provides an exceptional opportunity for disabled people to experience the wilderness by boat.
- #171 Provide the special access necessary into portions of areas.
  - #178 Provide more information to entities that lead organized trips for disabled citizens. I believe this would lead to more use by disabled persons in small groups.
  - #183 Ensure that all management actions are consistent with the Wilderness Act and the principles of Wilderness management.
  - #184 Fully accessible trails would provide access.
  - #174 We're in the process of developing a wilderness education packet [it's an expanded (Arkansas information) version of the GREEN SCENE]. We'd like to augment or adapt this packet for special populations that often don't get this kind of broadcast benefit. This is a key area where I think we could do a lot more. We've just recently installed a TTY/TDD at the Forests' Supervisor's Office. Here on the district we had a Wilderness Ranger who took a signing class last spring. She's the one who initiated the TTY/TDD when she realized the need. She's now working for VISTA so we've lost this link. I'm still in contact with her so I'll get her ideas on the education packet or get some of her contacts. We're also getting ready to start the LAC process here on the forest. I've gotten a statewide list of organizations with placement activities for persons with disabilities. This may be a good place to initiate involvement at the planning level.
  - # 24 Permitting outfitters and guides who cater to people and groups with disabilities. Possibly, preference for these outfitters where other standards for permit are met. Some short loop trails into the wilderness with wheelchair accessibility where feasible.
  - #31 Information, support and minimum exceptions to the Wilderness Act in regards to mechanized vehicles. I think we may be opening a can of worms with exceptions.
  - #34 Provide enough funding to hire enough people to manage the wilderness, without it being just one of many co-lateral duties. Then work with private organizations to develop the programs we now lack.
  - #39 There are some groups which utilize horses for folks with disabilities and these seem to be a growing trend. With the existing wilderness legislation, only the promotion of horseback outfitters that are qualified to handle people with disabilities is a real possibility and those that are able to walk with or without help from friends, family, groups, etc..
  - #40 Encourage our permitted outfitter/guides to develop programs to facilitate disabled people who wish to access the wilderness.
  - #15 Working with outfitters to develop opportunities for outfitted travel. Widening some trail surfaces to accommodate wheelchairs. Interpreting to

disabled visitors what the wilderness resource is where they may not have that familiarity (such as with our fly-in visitors).

- #192 Leave Delirium to wetlands and wildlife. Spend the time and effort in areas offering better opportunities for access by everyone. In Delirium, anyone under 50 pounds (wet weight) must be teathered to another person so the mosquitos don't carry them away.
- #197 Could rewrite the wilderness management plan to allow for a few trails with a surface and a width to accommodate wheelchairs.
- #154 According to our Recreation Staff Officer and the District Ranger that I work for, it is still illegal to operate any form of mechanized equipment in wilderness areas due to a Forest Supervisor's order signed on 10/30/90.
- #208 Please note that these wilderness areas are managed under the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act, in addition to the Wilderness Act. Hence, transportation via airplanes, motorboats, snowmachines, and non-motorized wheelchair access is legal. All of these make the wilderness easier to access for many people, including those with disabilities. If more people were aware of these modes of access, more folks may be apt to recreate there. Another potential is for an outfitter guide to target a specific public for wilderness activities.
- #18 Barrier-free trail construction.
- #21 I would like to receive information on how other units are managing for the enjoyment of persons with disabilities. Our office doesn't really receive inquiries on access for these people. If it were feasible, I would be interested in providing a way for persons with disabilities to enjoy the backcountry, then reach out to them.
- #27 Identify those areas with easier access and make them known to persons with disabilities. Identify outfitters that will pack in physically challenged and make them known to those who inquire.
- #36 Outfitters and guides are the principle suppliers of wilderness access opportunities with special accommodations for frail and/or disabled visitors. There may be a marketing opportunity for these providers.
- #160 While I don't believe we have much use within the wilderness area by people with disabilities, the wilderness is bordered by a national scenic byway and has day use facilities adjacent to it, including vistas and developed recreation sites, which get a significant amount of use by disabled persons.
- #191 Provide better access for those with disabilities.
- #5 Construct short sections of the existing trail systems to standards that will serve wheelchairs, inter vegetation - geology, soils, wildlife, etc.



- #79 The following comments were requested from Andy Ceballos - nkrd employee who is a paraplegic. Access to attractions of our wilderness (Indian Rock Art) should be provided for handicapped. Hardened trails should be constructed to allow some access into wilderness areas just so they can say that they have been into a wilderness area.
- #153 Our wilderness is for the most part inaccessible to all persons because of the dense vegetation. At best, trails would have to be cut and hardened. Boardwalks would have to be built.
- #159 Authorize use of wheelchairs, including motorized wheelchairs for disabled persons.
- #169 Promotion of wilderness and that it is open to people of all abilities if they desire to make the adventure. Our wilderness is trailless mountains and not easy to travel. But disabled can enter and enjoy the experience.
- #179 Our wilderness terrain is mountainous and very rugged. Handicapped facilities will be difficult to "develop".
- #187 We need to promote use of the entire Green Mountain National Forest not just the wilderness areas. We are developing a better program each year and hopefully we will begin to see an increase in use by persons with disabilities.
- #194 There is potential for a viewing area in one wilderness and a trail in another. These options will be addressed at the time the development plan is worked on in the future.
- #210 Continue to let everyone know that the challenge the Wilderness' preserve is available for those who wish to experience it.
- #1 As mentioned above, we have one Portal which would be ideal to give wheelchair or other physically impaired people access to the Wilderness. Most of our trails are rugged, and the terrain makes it nearly impossible to change the style of trails. We need to look at means of providing a good wilderness experience for hearing or sight impaired people, too. They could use the existing accesses, but interpretive means would enhance their experiences.
- #53 Improve wilderness entrance trails.
- #80 There are no developed trails within the wilderness area. Trail construction in the Box is a possibility but not in Death Hollow.
- #151 Differentially abled people are currently allowed to use our units of the wilderness preservation system. The one thing we will need to do is better define the challenge levels that differentially abled people can expect.
- #120 Diamond Peak has little use and a short use period due to mosquitos and snow. Major reconstruction could be done to widen and lower grades of trails (two short trails feasibly) and provide surfacing

- over rocky areas. The person we talked to who went in by wheelchair said the short trail was wide enough and fairly flat.
- #110 In some instances, you could improve trail access to facilitate use. However, wilderness values override recreational desires and should always be considered.
- #103 Special maintenance on a few miles of relatively flat terrain to enable wheelchairs and those using canes to travel safely.
- #104 Inventory and classify trails according to accessibility (Easy, Moderate, Difficult, etc.)
- #93 Keep trails free of rocks and roots by using a special wilderness trail crew just for wilderness areas.
- #92 The trails could be made wider to provide a greater safety margin for disabled persons.
- #82 More outreach to organized groups of individuals with disabilities.
- #64 Have information sheet printed and readily available for people who request that kind of information. Currently, verbal information is all we have for people with disabilities.
- #63 Encourage outfitters and guides to specifically provide service for the disabled. I have one permittee who offers disabled services.
- #62 Encourage outfitter/guides to provide the service.
- #108 Provide brochures that suggest persons with disabilities can use stock to access the wilderness.
- #50 Treat them no differently than any other wilderness user.
- #114 Construct some selected trails to standards usable by those with disabilities. This might even mean paving a trail or two so those in wheelchairs can access the wilderness. (This would also require wheelchairs being made an exception to the "no mechanized equipment" regulation.)
- #126 A special permit could be initiated to allow wheelchair use in the wilderness, or an order issued that would allow for the use of motorized access by physically challenged folks depending on their handicap. Special areas could be developed within certain designated Wildernesses to allow for this type of recreation experience only by physically challenged persons (ie. wheelchair use).
- #131 As an agency, we could contact local residents who rent horses and see if they are interested in horse rental for people with physical disabilities. Soda Peaks Lakes is a destination that could be a short 1-1/2 mile trip by road when the trail is repaired (a logging operation obliterated the trail). If the Wilderness Plan accepted wheelchairs, the entire trail system would have to be widened and



rerouted since the grade is very steep. This is another option although some might argue it takes the "wild" out of wilderness. People with disabilities have a right to visit their national forests.

- #128 Nothing additional can be done to the existing portion of the wilderness we manage (in Washington). In the additional area that is proposed (for Idaho), perhaps reconstruction of one trail could accommodate wheelchairs.
- #107 Whether congressionally designated wildernesses could allow access by a wheelchair.
- #52 Publicize the fact that we allow non-motorized wheelchairs in under special use permit and that some outfitter guides give discounts to disabled people.
- #163 Nothing. We have an overlook (Wiseman's view) that is accessible by wheelchair. This gives people who are not mobile a chance to view the grandeur of the gorge.
- #135 Change the designation from Wilderness to Roadless Area. The wilderness designation restricts our management options. As a roadless area we could manage for a wider diversity of users as well as increasing the carrying capacity of the more fragile areas. We are going to have to make some changes in the wilderness act to permit us to develop more accessible trails and other facilities for the handicapped user.
- #17 The wilderness area is a challenging place. Let's leave it that way. If the desire is there, then disadvantaged people will find a way to get up there and enjoy it. We allow wheelchairs if it is non-motorized and is the only way people can get around.
- #43 Nothing should be done.
- #33 These areas should be left as is and no mechanical devices should be allowed.

For question 18, the following common recommendations were made:

*improve trails	38
*Supply information	37
*Use outfitter/guides	29
*trailhead facilities	25
*work with groups serving disabled	20
*educate ourselves	7
*improve policies, regulations	5